

# **The Builders**

Religion 12

# The Builders

## An Allegory

By

I. H. Synge

"Through wisdom is an house buildied ;  
And by understanding it is established :  
And by knowledge are the chambers filled  
With all precious and pleasant riches."

Prov. xxiv. 3, 4.

London

Elliot Stock

62, Paternoster Row, E.C.

1906

" No man is born into the world, whose work  
Is not born with him ; there is always work  
And tools to work withal, for those who will."

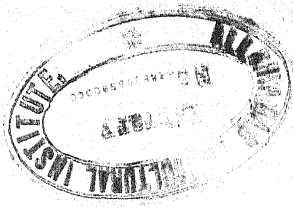
J. R. LOWELL.



## PREFACE

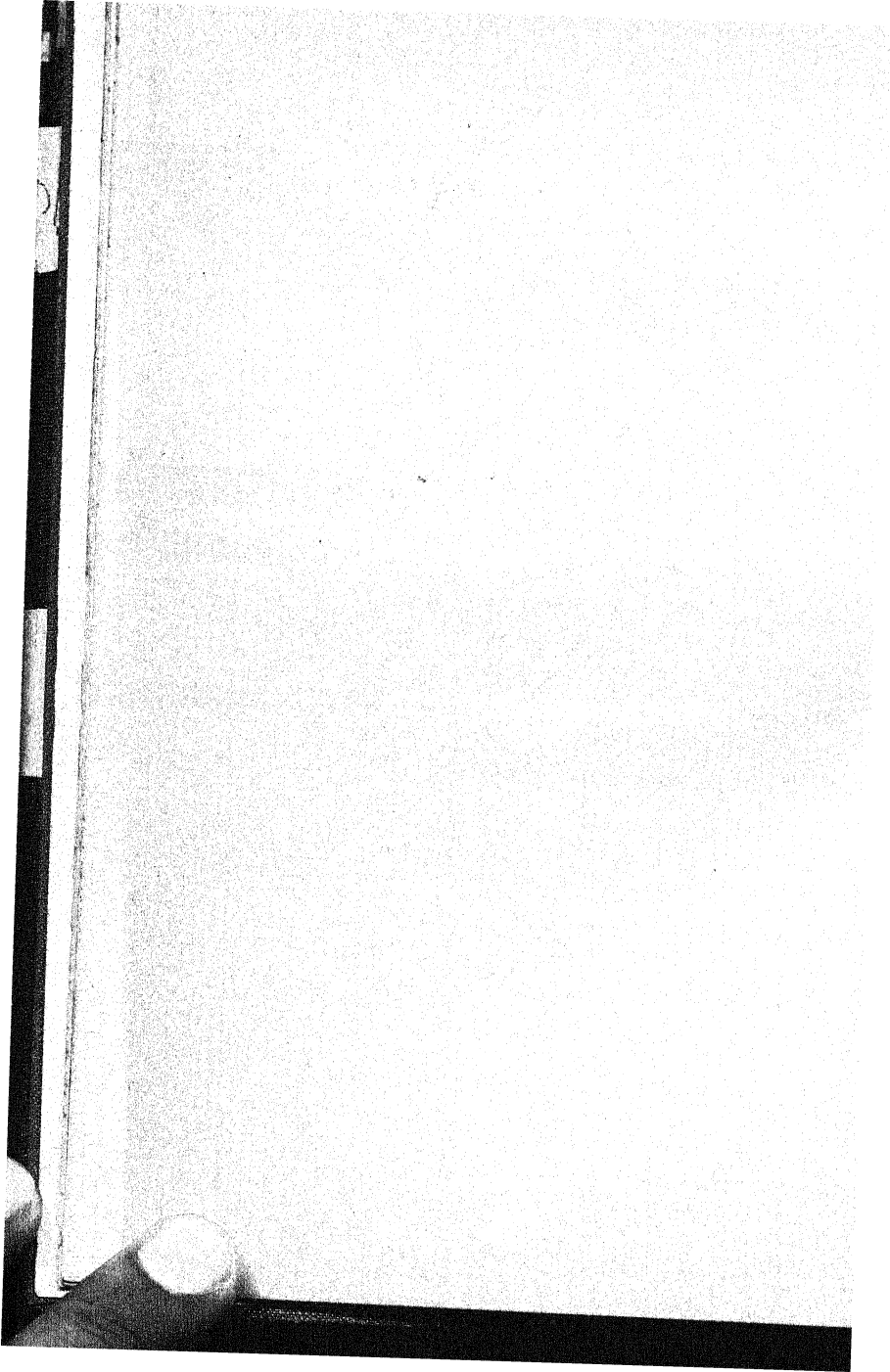
THIS Allegory is founded on the following words of a Master-BUILDER :

“According to the grace of God which was given unto me, as a wise master-builder I laid a foundation : and another buildeth thereon. But let each man take heed how he buildeth thereon. For other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. But if any man buildeth on the foundation gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay, stubble : each man’s work shall be made manifest : for the day shall declare it, because it is revealed in fire ; and the fire itself shall prove each man’s work of what sort it is. If any man’s work shall abide which he built thereon, he shall receive a reward. If any man’s work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss : but he himself shall be saved ; yet so as through fire.”



## CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. INTRODUCTORY - - -	I
II. A ROYAL PROCLAMATION - -	9
III. THE CITY FOUNDED - -	15
IV. THE BUILDERS AT WORK - -	23
V. AMPLIAS AND APELLES - -	37
VI. IN THE GOLD MINE - -	50
VII. THE STRANGERS - -	77
VIII. A VISIT TO THE ALIEN TOWN -	90
IX. THE VILLAGE OF TRUMPETS -	111
X. SEEKING GEMS FROM THE NORTH PLATEAU - - -	128
XI. FROM THE ALIEN TOWN TO THE ROYAL CITY - - -	157
XII. THE CHILD BUILDERS - -	177
XIII. A BUILDER IN PERIL - -	188
XIV. THE BUILDINGS TESTED - -	207
XV. THE COMING OF THE KING -	218
APPENDIX - - - -	229



# THE BUILDERS

## *AN ALLEGORY*

### CHAPTER I.

#### INTRODUCTORY.

THE King of a vast and mighty realm possessed a province in a distant part of his dominion, in which he took great and special interest. This land was guarded by mountain chains on three sides—the mountains being included in its boundaries—between which lay a broad and glorious plain, stretching away into the blue distance. It was well watered, and as fertile and fruitful as heart could desire.

The history of its people, however, was not in keeping with the harmony of its lovely landscapes. They were a proud,

## THE BUILDERS

self-willed race, and had risen in revolt against the Royal Government. The soul of the rebellion was a certain ex-noble, who, years before, had belonged to the Royal Household. He had turned traitor to his Sovereign, and being degraded and exiled from the Court, he took revenge by lighting the fire of rebellion in this distant province of the Empire. He prepared the way by lying slanders about the King, and about His plans and purposes; and when discontent arose he fanned it into flames, urged the people to rebel, and led them against the King.

But their Royal Master did not give them up, and in the councils of the Empire it was decided that the King's only Son should go to the distressed country, and by his own personal endeavours restore peace to these distracted subjects. The Prince was associated with his Father in the Government of the Empire, so that his orders and commands were as binding as those of the King, and he shared with

## INTRODUCTORY

his Father the title of Sovereign. Heralded by many messengers, who proclaimed the good-will of their Sovereign in this new departure of his Government, the Prince set forth from his palace, and journeyed straight to a corner of the province where a few adherents still clung to the Royal cause.

It was the Prince's chief purpose in coming to the Province to encounter the Adversary and to conquer and break his power. First, he gathered some followers together, and trained them in his own matchless mode of warfare; and when his experienced eye saw that they were ready to become skilful warriors themselves, he warned them that he was going to fight the Adversary in single combat, and through his conflict gain for them a decisive victory. After which he should return home and leave them to carry on the campaign.

When that terrible day came, his adherents, to their grief and dismay, saw

## THE BUILDERS

their Lord apparently worsted in the fight. While the combat raged, the heavens were suddenly darkened, the lightning flashed, the earth quaked, and in the gloom they thought the Prince was killed. But in the obscurity they did not discern that he moved away, and they did not know that he passed on to another place where no eye could follow the combat.

On the third day, while they mourned and wept because they thought all was ruined, their Prince killed, the province lost, the Royal cause annihilated—to their wonder and delight the Prince walked in with victory in his face. And though they never knew the story of the combat, they learned that the Adversary had been defeated and his power broken. But they also learned that, though conquered, the Adversary—for State reasons which it was not for them to know at present—was still at large, and would be at large, until such time as the King visited his province at a later date. Their love was stirred to

## INTRODUCTORY

white-heat as they saw how their Royal Master was scarred by the battle. And they willingly listened to his command to be ready to carry on the campaign, as soon as the Viceroy arrived, whom he would send on his return to the Palace. He charged them to be ready for warfare, either open or covert, and to be equally on their guard against direct assaults, and attacks by ruse and cunning.

Before his departure the Prince made known to his friends that the system of posts between the capital and the province would be perpetual and rapid, so that they could constantly communicate with him and he with them. He could not permit any of them to accompany him back to the metropolis, for none could share in the great and triumphant entry awaiting him there. The Viceroy, he further told them, would govern the province until he returned. They were to trust and confide in him, and in all things obey his orders and carry out his commands.



## THE BUILDERS

Soon after the Prince's farewell, the Viceroy suddenly arrived amongst them. The people quickly learned to love him. He worked unceasingly on their behalf. At any moment, day or night, if danger or peril threatened them, he was instantly at their service. But they found that while his patience and forbearance were inexhaustible, he was not to be trifled with. He was strong and swift in action, and when orders were disobeyed, and rebukes unheeded, he resorted to sterner measures. As soon, however, as the needed reformation came about, he pardoned the offenders and restored them to favour. Nothing angered him more than an injury done by one citizen to another. He could not brook oppression, and insisted that fellow-subjects of the King must love and serve one another.

From the moment of his advent the enemy began to fall back, and success followed the Royal arms. Many of the rebels gave themselves up, and sued for

## INTRODUCTORY

pardon. It was granted to them so generously that they were treated at once as friends and allies. The fame of this clemency, spreading through the land, induced many more rebels to give themselves up and follow the Viceroy's banner.

The enemy still fought on with determination. Although the Adversary knew that his power was broken, he acknowledged no defeat, and led the rebels unceasingly against the Royal troops. But though apparently as bold and daring as ever, the people discovered that, after the terrible single combat with the Prince, he was liable to panics, and while he led his levies as boldly as of old to the attack, he retreated when met by an undaunted front. He came on as bold as a lion, but at the shout of their war-cries he turned and fled.

As the King's party increased, the Adversary's rage and activity increased too. If the people were too well armed and watchful for open attack, he resorted

## THE BUILDERS

to stratagems. He went about in disguises, sometimes even in the King's uniform, and posing as a friend, he would grumble against the Government, accuse their Ruler of over-severity, or over-clemency as the case might be. He strove to make dissensions between the different army corps, to awaken jealousies between the officers. He seemed ubiquitous, hurrying over the land and doing every mischief and injury he could against the authority of the Prince and against his adherents.

## CHAPTER II.

### A ROYAL PROCLAMATION.

**I**T happened on a certain day that all through the province, in town and village, the people were summoned to hear a proclamation from the King, which his Messengers had brought from the Court. It was as follows :

### PROCLAMATION.

He who is of Kings the King, of Lords the Lord, commands his faithful citizens to build and prepare for him a Royal Dwelling-place, as he purposes to honour them by taking up his residence in their midst.

He bestows the privilege of erecting it upon the citizens of the province, because the work will entitle all who share it to innumerable privileges, and to future favours and honours beyond computation. He has selected the site and sanctioned the plans ; and is assured that under the guidance and

## THE BUILDERS

direction of their Viceroy, the people will be able to build a City which will be of fame and glory throughout all countries, and worthy to be the habitation of their august Sovereign.

The King will receive constant tidings of the progress of the work, and when he deems that the City is sufficiently advanced, he and his son will come immediately in regal state and enter their new abode. Their Presence and Court will bring and assure to the peoples of the land such safety, peace, and prosperity as they have never experienced.

All those who desire to take part in the work are advised to apply to the Government Offices for a copy of the Royal Orders.

When the message was finished, the people hurried to the Offices, and obtained copies of the Orders in which the whole scheme was outlined. The Orders were written on vellum in gold lettering. First, there were pictures of the site, then plans of the City, then Orders concerning the Builders.

The site chosen was a rocky hill, belonging to the Crown, which rose abruptly from a stretch of luxuriant land. It was a natural citadel of rock, lying foursquare.

## A ROYAL PROCLAMATION

The people knew it well, and locally described it under a variety of names. Some called it the Rock of Strength, some the Rock of Refuge, others again the Rock of the Ages, which last name had been handed down for centuries. It was celebrated in song and verse, and far-famed were the streams which gushed down from its crystal springs. Everyone agreed that it was an incomparable site.

The plans foreshadowed a City, great and glorious as the vision of a dream. The buildings were to be made entirely of durable and precious stone and marble, with fittings of gold and silver. Each Builder would receive a design which he was to carry out in consultation with the Viceroy. No two houses were to be exactly alike, as the King desired a wealth of variety.

The foundations of every house were to be built into the living rock. The walls of the City would be made under the direct orders of the King, who intended to send

## THE BUILDERS

Royal Workmen from the metropolis to erect them, and they would also set up gates of skilled workmanship. Large store-houses would be prepared, from which everyone occupied in the work would have the privilege of drawing supplies ; building ground would be assigned to each applicant by the Viceroy, who would divide to each man severally according as he willed.

The Orders laid down for the Builders covered every detail of the work. First, everyone who desired to share in the work was to give in his name and have it entered on the Royal Muster Roll. They must signify their abhorrence of past disobedience and rebellion, and their individual allegiance to the Prince. They must all work as equals—men, women, and children. Nobles, merchants, husbandmen, artisans and all other classes must drop their distinctions. All who shared in the work would rank as equals in the sight of their Sovereign, and they were all to regard each other as brothers

## A ROYAL PROCLAMATION

and comrades. All must be attired in white uniforms, over which building aprons might be worn. The uniforms were to be kept spotlessly clean, for which purpose fountains of the crystal waters would be opened for the Builders' use.

As the City was designed to stand through the ages, the use of durable materials was commanded. All materials which could decay, such as wood, cane, reeds, thatch of straw or palm-leaf were forbidden. The materials were to be obtained from the King's quarries and mines. Workshops would be erected for refining the gold and silver, and the citizens were exhorted not to fear the toil and heat, which they must endure, to obtain and prepare the precious metals.

No building erected outside the great Rock would be considered part of the City. Each citizen would be entrusted with one Building, for which he would receive a plan from the Viceroy, who intended each house to fit into a general



## THE BUILDERS

and magnificent design for the whole City. When the work was completed, every building would be subjected to severe tests, and citizens were warned only to use the lasting materials sanctioned in the King's Orders, as any substance less enduring would not last through the test.

### CHAPTER III.

#### THE CITY FOUNDED.

IT did not take long for the loyal citizens to make up their minds after reading the Roll. With one consent they acclaimed the Royal purpose, and they hastened to send the King their homage and thanks for his promise to come and live amongst them, and for their share in the honour of preparing a City for his habitation.

Soon there were groups of people to be seen all over the country, hastening to the Viceroy's Palace, where the names of all who wished to become Builders had to be enrolled. It was built in the Crown Lands under the shadow of the Rock Citadel. There were people of every kind, and of every rank, old and young. Amongst the latter was a tall and singularly attrac-

## THE BUILDERS

tive youth, Fortis by name, and by his side his fair sister, Fidelitas.

At the entrance lodge, members of the Household were in waiting to give them the oath of allegiance, in which they recanted all past disloyalty. They said it in any words they liked, or they could use the simple formula prepared for them: "I acknowledge my sin; I have transgressed and have rebelled. Henceforth all that the King hath said will I do, and be obedient."

They then passed on into the Palace itself—men, women, and children. Every voice was hushed when they entered the State room, for all were conscious of awe in approaching their great Viceroy. One of his Attendants took down their names, and wrote them in the Royal Muster Roll, and then, as they passed before him, he presented each one with the King's Token.

It was a sparkling white stone, across which was written the name of the City

## THE CITY FOUNDED

that no one had heard before. In one corner was engraven the Prince's sign manual, a cross with a crown above it, and on the transverse corner the Viceroy's emblem, a dove with outstretched wings. In his quiet, still voice, he told them to hold it fast so that no man might take it from them; and to remember that it was a pledge by which they could claim innumerable privileges. It entitled them to provisions from the King's storehouses, building materials from the Crown Lands, use of the Government posts, the services of the King's Messengers. With reverent thanks they each took the precious Token, and, bowing low, spoke words of love and devotion ere they were ushered out of their great Chief's presence. As they came out Fortis and Fidelitas kissed their Tokens again and again.

"I could hardly look at the Viceroy as he handed me mine," said Fidelitas to her brother; "I wanted to drop on my knees while he spoke. Did you not feel a

## THE BUILDERS

burning in your heart when he said, 'Hold it fast'?"

While the work of enrolling went on the people hastened to finish their business and made all preparations for starting on the great enterprise. Soon there were tidings that the Viceroy had fixed the day for laying the first stone of the Glorious City.

In the early morning, when the heavens were glowing with crimsons and purples, and the summits of the mountains were flashing into sight through the violet haze of the dawn, and the air was fragrant with the indescribable scent of the flowers wet with dew, trumpet blasts summoned everyone to join the great procession. Trumpeters and musicians led the way, singers followed chanting odes in praise of their Sovereigns, and vaunting their glory and might. Then came the citizen guards bearing aloft banners embroidered with some of the Sovereigns' titles. The Viceroy had selected a few out of the

## THE CITY FOUNDED

hundreds which belonged to them : " King of Kings," " Prince of Princes," " The Glory of His People," " The Highest," " The Upholder of all Things," " A Strength to the Poor," " A Deliverer," and " The Lord Mighty in Battle."

In the centre came the Viceroy, and borne in front of him was an ancient and celebrated standard woven in gold and gems. It had no exact design, and yet, according to the light which caught it, there seemed to shine from its iridescent hues, sometimes a rainbow, sometimes a crown, sometimes a two-edged sword, and sometimes a palm branch. This famous standard was called by the people, " Love." It had a long and marvellous history. Its folds had led always to victory, and it had gleamed and glistened on the field during the day of the dread combat between the Prince and the Adversary.

They advanced up through the wooded slope by a natural causeway, which led

## THE BUILDERS

from the plain to the Citadel Rock. Every moment the views of the distance became more enchanting, and a fairer vision than that outspread was never seen by mortal eyes.

The summit was a plateau. It was covered with flowers of unimaginable beauty, and flowing amongst them were streams of crystal waters which gushed out of the living Rock. In the centre was a slight eminence, and this was the place chosen for the ceremony.

Everything was in readiness, prepared according to the Viceroy's directions, and when the vast concourse had taken their places, the coverings of cerulean blue were swung back, and the Foundation Stone was revealed. It was of some unknown strata, flashing with opal light, and the rays glancing from it were so dazzling that the people hid their faces.

The silver trumpets sounded, and all the instruments burst together into the strains of the royal anthems. Then there

## THE CITY FOUNDED

was a sudden silence, and the Viceroy's voice was heard saying, "Behold I lay a foundation stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation. Other foundation may no man lay than that is laid." And as he guided it into place, again the trumpets blared, the music crashed, the singers chanted, and the people shouted with a great shout, so that the noise was heard afar off.

Once more there was silence while the Viceroy spoke. "Let your hands be strong, ye that hear these words, in the day that the foundation of the King's house is laid. Be strong, all ye people of the land, and work, for the house and City that are to be builded for the King of Kings must be exceeding magnificent, famous for its glory and beauty throughout all lands."

The people shouted their acclamations again, joining with mighty voice in the chant specially written for that day: "To our Sovereigns belong greatness and victory



## THE BUILDERS

and majesty. They are exalted above all ; riches and honour come from them. It is in their hands to make great or abase. We offer our thanks and praise to their glorious names, because they will in very deed dwell with us in the City which they have chosen. We will arise and build, that they may come and take possession."

The voices rose and fell in glorious melody. When the last sounds had died away, the citizens found, to their surprise, that they were invited to a great banquet. They had no idea what complete preparation the Viceroy had made for this festal day. He bade them with gracious words sit down and feast at his tables, for it was a time of rejoicing and gladness.

And afterwards, as they explored the Rock, they discovered at every turn some new beauty or strength in the great Citadel.

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE BUILDERS AT WORK.

ROYAL Workmen, under the Viceroy's orders, marked out the thoroughfares of the City. The avenues all led up to the site of the Palace. The four central ones, leading towards each cardinal point, were very broad, and were to terminate in stately gateways. The avenues were crossed by numerous streets.

When they had all been staked out, the Viceroy proceeded to assign a site to each citizen for the house he was to build; and though some of them were not content at first with the place given to them, everyone eventually found that it was best fitted to his particular idiosyncrasies and ideals.

Then, in a large Office, specially pre-

## THE BUILDERS

pared for the purpose, the Viceroy received the citizens in turn, and gave them each the design they were to follow. Many of the smaller details were left for them to fill up in consultation with him. He told them that he would always be at their service, and always ready to receive them and that they might refer to him in every problem and perplexity. Moreover he appointed some of the most experienced citizens to be Master-Builders, to instruct and encourage those who needed such help.

He told them that while all Builders might counsel and inspire one another, no one might be assisted in the house given to him to make. The work had to be entirely his own—except where it was beyond his strength, when Royal Workmen would always be at hand to help. He also said that all the cement to be used in the construction of the City was to be taken from the Royal Workshops, whither it was sent directly from the Metropolis.

## THE BUILDERS AT WORK

It was unique in substance and in its lustrous appearance, and was more imperishable than stone itself.

He further instructed the Builders about the quarries and mines, whence marble, and precious stones of many kinds, and gold, silver and other metals could be procured, some near at hand, some distant and difficult of access. The neighbouring mountains were rich in minerals and metals; there were mines where gems could be found, and beds of streams, which could also be searched for them, and in whose sand grains of gold might be discovered.

As the Viceroy told them what material he advised them to use, they were struck by the intimate knowledge he exhibited of their capabilities and limitations. To some of small strength he advised use of the nearer quarries, to others he urged the more arduous search for rare stone in remote parts of the province.

Soon busy groups of people were scat-

## THE BUILDERS

tered over the country. The clang of their tools, and the ring of their hammers sounded out over the landscape, and oft-times above them could be heard the shout of voices, as the young men chanted the Builders' song :

" All the architects of Fate,  
Working in these walls of Time :  
Some with massive deeds and great,  
Some with ornaments of rhyme.

" Nothing useless is or low ;  
Each thing in its place is best ;  
And what seems but idle show  
Strengthens and supports the rest.

" For the structure that we raise,  
Time is with materials filled ;  
Our to-days and yesterdays  
Are the blocks with which we build.

" Truly shape and fashion these ;  
Leave no yawning gaps between ;  
Think not, because no man sees,  
Such things will remain unseen."

Early and late Fortis and his sister were strenuously at work. They seemed the happiest people in the world as they

## THE BUILDERS AT WORK

plied their chisels and gradually cut out the shining blocks which they longed to get into place. Not that they did each other's work; they cut and sculptured their own blocks, but they stood side by side, and each exulted in the progress of the other.

It was a day of joy when the first stones were laid in place. Like the other Builders, they made their first tier of crimson-hued marble, cemented securely into the Living Rock. On this foundation they built in pure white marble, sculpturing the blocks into a beautiful design, which they intended further to enrich with rare red jasper and onyx, for which they left spaces according to their plan.

"And I hope we shall find some gems also," said Fortis, "for I want to have one of the Prince's titles across the doorway in sparkling stones."

But a day came when they were sorely discouraged. The weather had been dark

## THE BUILDERS

and stormy, and some stones which they had been working at proved the wrong size, when carried to their places. Fortis threw down his tools in anger.

"After all my work these blocks are no good," he exclaimed; "if they are altered to the right size, the whole pattern that I've chiselled will be spoiled."

Fidelitas had had a similar misfortune. "How could it have happened?" she queried. "I know we measured them all right, and it will take ages to alter them."

"I shall just push them into their places," grumbled Fortis; "they will all go in except one. I'll fill up the interstices with rubble, and if the design is spoilt I can't help it."

But Fidelitas would not agree to this, as far as her house was concerned. With chagrin and disappointment she put her polished blocks back in the cart; and Fortis, in the end, heaved his into a cart also, and started back to the workshop in a very bad humour.

## THE BUILDERS AT WORK

Fidelitas and her cart got far ahead, while he dawdled slowly along. When he came to a place where two roads met a man accosted him.

"Do you want some building materials, sir?" he asked.

"Don't talk to me about building materials," answered Fortis; "I'm in a temper with mine, for they are all wrong. I think I shall give up my job."

"I am your man, then," said the stranger; "I have a builder's yard down yonder, where materials of all kinds are supplied."

"Not good enough for me, I doubt," said Fortis; "but I'll come and look." He left the cart and walked a long way down a road which was unknown to him, coming at last to an enclosure where all sorts of builders' materials were stored.

"You see," said the stranger, proudly, "we have every variety that can be desired. We can put up a palace for a prince or a cottage for a herdsman. We



## THE BUILDERS

can supply stone by cubic measurement, polished and ready to any pattern desired. Look here, sir, at these white blocks; would any of them suit you?"

"Well, you can tell me the measurements of that lot," said Fortis, pointing to them.

He was astonished when he heard they were to a decimal what he required. He measured them again himself to make sure, and then he ordered them.

"I'll have all that set," said he; "they are exactly the size I want, and if they have not a pattern chiselled on them I can't help it. Can you send them for me?"

"As far as the cross-roads," answered the man; "we haven't a permit to cart materials on the Crown Lands, so we can't bring them further."

"All right. To-morrow, at noon, I'll be there; don't fail me," and with that Fortis started back.

The next day, sure enough, he was at the cross-roads with horse and cart,

## THE BUILDERS AT WORK

having thrown his faulty blocks into the ditch ; and when the stranger appeared, he helped him to shift the load. It struck him as rather curious that the stone was nothing like as heavy as the marble that he had so far used, and a suspicion crossed his mind that there was cheating somewhere, but he was still sore from his disappointment, and determined to believe it was all right.

He found that they dove-tailed into place exactly. The polish was not equal perhaps to the stones on which they were placed, and there was no pattern on them, but a weight was off his mind, for that re-modelling of the marble would not have to be done.

Meanwhile the stones which Fidelitas had thought finished, were back again in the workshop. She seized a rule and, measuring them, found indeed that they were all out of size.

"How is this ?" she cried ; "I am certain they were cut exactly to the pattern."

## THE BUILDERS

On the floor was another rule. She flung away the one in her hand, and taking up the other measured again. This time they were perfectly right. Bewildered she put the rules side by side, and found that they did not tally; one was larger than the other. She hurried off with them to a Master-Builder, and poured out her story to him.

He examined them, and soon gave her the explanation. "Look," said he; "this large rule has no crown mark; it does not belong to the King's workshops, and measures falsely."

"Who dared to put it amongst my tools?" asked Fidelitas indignantly.

"That I cannot answer," said the Master-Builder, "but there is no doubt who is at the bottom of it. The Adversary planned this, and has had this false measure slipped in by one of his party. You would have seen, if you had thought, that it was not the right one, for it is of

## THE BUILDERS AT WORK

different wood and colour to anything supplied to us."

"That is just what struck me two or three times," said Fidelitas dejectedly, "but I never dreamed of such a trick."

"Poor child," said the Master-Builder; "it is hard to learn that we have to be always on our guard against his wiles. Don't be discouraged. The enemy won't catch you this way again, and you have plenty of time to re-model those stones."

So Fidelitas went back, and started once more at them. She shed many tears over the first: it was so disheartening to go over each bit again; but after awhile she cheered up, and somehow the work seemed better done this time, the polish more even, the lines more delicate, the curves of the flowers more exact to her pattern.

When her task was advancing, she found on her bench, one morning, a new set of tools for cutting and polishing stone. She learnt that on the previous

## THE BUILDERS

were that the Builders should keep their apparel white.

"You must go to the fountain near the gates. It was set up on purpose for us to wash off stains and defilement," answered Fidelitas. "I'll come and wash my tunic, too."

So they went, and as soon as Fortis flung his garments into the sparkling water every stain vanished. And a little later, when the brother and sister started away together, their clothes were whiter than any fuller's earth could have made them.

## CHAPTER V.

### AMPLIAS AND APELLES.

TWO men named Amplias and Apelles, who were amongst the first to volunteer for the great work, were building their houses side by side.

Well and truly had they laid the foundation in blood-red jasper, dovetailed securely into the rock. And on it Amplias was building white marble with blue veins, and Apelles white marble with gold-lined markings. They had different but very beautiful designs, in which the delicate hues of colour in the stone were meant to combine with the pattern chiselled upon it. The marbles which they had respectively chosen were found in neighbouring quarries, and the friends agreed to polish and work up their stone at the same workshop.

## THE BUILDERS

But as they worked they disputed. They were not at all content with each other's plans. Amplias was sure that the blue colour would be the most pleasing to their Sovereign and wanted his friend to adopt it, while Apelles was equally sure that the golden streaks on his marble were best and wanted Amplias to employ it. And, curious to say, this discussion seemed more important than the work, for again and again the tools were idle, while the merits of the respective designs were argued.

"Well, as you won't be convinced, let us ask the opinion of some of our neighbours," said Amplias.

Several refused to come, as they were much too busy to give the time, but a number gathered round, and some were in favour of the blue design, and some of the gold design, and others were in favour of the houses being both alike, as they were building side by side.

At this moment a Master-Builder, who

## AMPLIAS AND APELLES

was passing by, asked what all the talking was about, and they immediately clamoured for his opinion.

"I've none to give," answered he, "but the Viceroy told us that there was to be diversity in the construction of the houses, and if you are perplexed you can go and consult him. He is ready to give you an interview at any moment," and so saying, he went on to his work.

"I don't think he knows much about the matter," murmured one of the men to another.

Just then a tall individual entered in the dress which distinguished the King's Messengers. They at once referred the question to him.

"Tell me first if you are building near one another," he said.

"Yes," they answered.

"Then my advice is to make your houses alike of yellow-lined marble, and if you'll show me your designs, I'll tell you what I think of them." He spoke with



## THE BUILDERS

an air of authority, and they both got their designs and laid them humbly before him.

"You'll never work out that elaborate pattern," said he. "Hand me a sheet of canvas and I'll sketch you a better one."

He made it very rapidly. It was bold and effective, but had nothing of the delicacy of the plans it was to supersede.

"There," said he; "I've had long experience in this sort of work; you can't better that."

The two Builders looked ruefully at it.

"It gives no place for the clasps of gems that we meant to put in the front, nor room for ornament over the doorway, where I thought of inserting a scroll with one of the Prince's titles," said Amplias.

At the mention of the Prince's name, a dark look passed across the man's face, but the Builders did not perceive it.

## AMPLIAS AND APELLES

"You will find that you have all the ornament you need when that is finished," he replied; and while they gazed irresolutely at the canvas, he finished a duplicate, and handing it to them, said, "You will make much quicker progress now. Follow that carefully, and I'll come along soon and see how you are getting on."

"Well, a King's Messenger must know what he is about," said Amplias, "and if I adopt your colour, at any rate I shan't be following your plan, nor shall I work near you again," and he spent the rest of the day in removing his bench and tools to another workshop. The blue-veined marble which was cut and ready for polishing, was thrown on the dustheap, and he proceeded to hew out fresh stone in the same mine as his friend, but in a gallery far removed from him.

Apelles also was thoroughly put out and miserable. He somehow felt as if he must follow the design given him, but he did not really like it half as much as the one

## THE BUILDERS

approved by the Viceroy. His pleasure and joy in his work died out.

Their houses went up very slowly. When they had blocks of marble ready to cement into place, they took good care not to meet on the way to the City, each ascertaining beforehand from a comrade that his enemy—for so, alas, they now called each other—would be engaged elsewhere.

Amplias had one day built in a tier of stones, over which he had spent many a month's hard work. He stood gazing up at the front of his house. There was nothing special about it; it was most commonplace, and as he gazed, he pictured to himself what that same front would have been if he had carried out the original design.

"I can't think what that Messenger was about to make me change my beautiful design," he murmured; "this is a mean thing compared to it. I've a good mind to start the original one again."

## AMPLIAS AND APELLES

With such ideas in his mind he returned to the workshop. Every moment the resolve grew more definite as he walked along. Directly he arrived, he took the plan and spreading it out, pondered what could be done. It was too late to return to his own design, he could see; but with coloured chalk he added some decorations which he thought would work in admirably.

He was so absorbed in the task that he did not hear a footstep behind him, and he started with surprise when, looking up, he saw that same Messenger by his side.

"Why are you altering my design?" asked he, with a frown.

"I am not altering it," said the Builder, "but adding to it."

"You are not to do anything of the sort," said he. "Do you suppose your trumpery ornaments would add to the effect? That design is meant for severe simplicity, and it will be perfect if you carry it out just as it is." And then he

## THE BUILDERS

asked whether a Messenger of the King was not to be trusted, and whether anyone could wish to aid the Citizens more than he did. Objections seemed to vanish while he argued, and before he left the workshop the Builder had agreed to follow his instructions.

When he was gone, Amplias hurled away the piece of chalk which was still in his hand, and walked up and down, miserable and discouraged, angry with himself and angry with the Messenger.

"I hope it may work out better than I think," he said. "In any case, it is easier work—that is my only crumb of comfort."

Time passed on. The walls of the houses were nearly finished, when one afternoon, through some miscalculation, their owners found themselves working side by side. They ignored each other completely, and did not speak a word.

It so happened that, just as they were starting homeward, when the sun was setting in glory, and the façades of the

## AMPLIAS AND APELLES

houses were shining with light, the Viceroy passed that way. He had only a few attendants with him, and as he drew near the men stood at the salute. Not that the Viceroy required this, but it was the habit of the citizens thus to greet their beloved Chief.

He stopped as he came abreast the houses, and cast one rapid glance over them. In the bright evening light every line showed clear and distinct. He asked what design they were following.

For a moment neither of the Builders could find voice; then one of them answered that they were both following a plan sketched out for them by a Messenger of the King.

"Show it to me," said the Viceroy.

Apelles had his copy at hand. He unfolded and spread it before him.

"This has no stamp of my office," the Viceroy said in a low, grave voice. "How did you come by it?"

They told him.

## THE BUILDERS

“And did you thus lightly put aside the designs which I had approved, which I had stamped with my seal, and which I had included in the general scheme of the adornment of the City?” he asked.

The men were covered with confusion.

“Because the draftsman was a King’s Messenger, I thought I ought to follow his advice, but I had misgivings,” answered Amplias.

“You had reasons for misgivings,” replied the Viceroy. “Did not the Prince’s warning come to your mind, and did not the words in the Royal Orders recur to you, bidding you not to be ignorant of the Adversary’s device, but to remember that his friends transform themselves into Master-Builders, and that he oft-times transforms himself into a King’s Messenger?”

They could give no answer. They only hung their heads.

“Have you worked together as brothers and comrades?” asked the Viceroy again.

## AMPLIAS AND APELLES

They gave no answer.

“Have you hated each other, you, who are fellow-citizens and friends of the Prince?” he questioned in a low, stern voice.

For answer the Builders fell on their faces before him speechless with shame.

“I have no more to say to you now,” he said, “but I will grant to you each a private interview to-morrow at my Palace,” and he passed down the street.

It was long before the men moved, but when they did, their first impulse was to clasp hands with a mutual request for pardon, and then they went sorrowfully home.

“I had doubts about that design all the time,” said Apelles, “but I took it because it made you adopt my colouring.”

“And I took it because it was less trouble than our elaborate design,” responded his comrade; “both shameful reasons,” he added, “and they destroyed our zeal for the adornment of the great City.”



## THE BUILDERS

They spent a night of misery ; the more they thought of the past, the more they loathed themselves, and as they summoned to mind those commonplace façades, so different to the beautiful ones they had planned, they groaned with disappointment. They dreaded the interview with their Chief, and Apelles nearly made up his mind not to go, but he was thankful to the end of his days that he did not crown his folly by refusing the privilege.

No one ever heard exactly what passed in those interviews, but their comrades learned that the original plans for the houses could never be carried out now, and that only a few adornments and improvements, which the Viceroy had sketched for them, could be added to their buildings ; that both Builders had sent despatches to the Prince telling him the whole story, expressing great sorrow that they had not followed the beautiful designs given to them, and the hope that with the advice and help of the Viceroy

## AMPLIAS AND APELLES

they might finish the rest of the buildings with the best possible workmanship.

Their comrades learned also that whatever passed in that interview transformed both Builders into devoted servants of the Viceroy. To obey his slightest command was their pleasure, to seek an interview with him their delight, to hear his voice was their joy.

## CHAPTER VI.

### IN THE GOLD MINE.

**I**N one of the roads connecting two main thoroughfares a beautiful house was rising. It was small, but the workmanship was skilled and artistic. The owner, Constanzia by name, had hastened when she heard the King's proclamation, to have her name enrolled among the Builders. She delighted to think of having a share in the work, which, when completed, would blaze abroad the greatness and magnificence of the King. Her house was not large, but it was very perfect in detail. Diagonally across the front was an exquisite bit of sculpture, from which the flowing design branched on either side.

And now, as the walls were finished,

## IN THE GOLD MINE

she was pondering over the roof, and the materials to be used. She went to consult the Viceroy—indeed the secret of all her success was her habit of constant reference to him. To her surprise he advised bronze crossbeams, with plates riveted to them, made of the purest gold. She started when she heard this, for she, in common with all the citizens, knew that the purest gold could only be obtained from one mine, and that arduous labour, hardships, privations, were the lot of all the miners ere they secured it.

The Viceroy gave her the kindest look, while he said, "Do not fear to go there. I know your works and love and service, and I know you are willing to risk anything for the glory of the Prince's City. If it was built wholly of purest gold it would still be unworthy of him," he added in a voice which thrilled her, "and it may well be deemed suitable that some of the buildings should gleam with its lustre, in the place where he intends to dwell."

## THE BUILDERS

"Then I obey, my Lord," answered the Builder, "and go forth to work there at your bidding."

"Go in confidence and hope," replied the Viceroy, "and day by day you will find that your strength will be equal to your work, about which I shall send directions." And whilst he laid his hand for a moment on her head, she felt a new courage and purpose flow through her being.

Before she left he gave her an order to take to the Royal Storehouse, whereby daily supplies would be ensured to her of the choicest and most sustaining food, such as was only sent to those engaged in most arduous work. So Constanzia made her preparations, and set forth to the new scene of her labour, a few days' journey distant.

When she arrived there, the King's servants supplied her with all tools and necessities. Before having a place assigned to her for work, she asked leave to make

## IN THE GOLD MINE

an exploring tour through the mine. The entrance in the side of the mountain was lofty, and galleries and passages led off in all directions. Some of them penetrated so far into the mountain-side that many miners stayed there altogether until they had obtained the gold that they wanted—all supplies and necessities being provided for them, and fresh food brought in daily by the King's servants. Indeed, miners were never so waited upon, watched over, and succoured, as those who worked in the Crown gold mine.

The light, which streamed in from the entrance, was soon left behind, and Constanzia had to move along by the light of the lantern which had been given to her, or by that of the lanterns of other miners whom she met or passed on the way.

There was a network of passages, lanes and paths, and it was much more than a day's occupation to explore them. She found that the galleries were distinguished by a variety of names. There was one

## THE BUILDERS

called the Blind Gallery, where miners of all ages were working a rich vein of ore. Hope and patience were written on many of their faces, and Constanzia was astonished to hear gladsome songs burst from their lips again and again.

"How can you sing such songs in this dark alley?" she asked.

"Because," answered one young workman, "we look forward to soon being in the light, and bringing the gold with us which our King requires for his City."

There were other lanes which went under the names of Hardship Gallery, and Privation Gallery; many women were working there. Another again was called Halting Gallery. The miners who worked in it were very varied, some very young, some tall and stalwart, some slender and delicate. The Gallery was low, and the vein of gold running along the side was difficult to cut out.

As Constanzia passed, she saw a youth fall back almost fainting. "I can't work

## IN THE GOLD MINE

any longer," he gasped, "I've hardly got any gold yet, but I shall be choked if I stay here any longer," and he panted hard. The next moment a King's Messenger stood by his side, fanning him with a palm branch. When he began to recover, he looked up and then threw himself on his face and burst into sobs. "I can't bear this stuffy passage," he murmured, "I shall have to leave it, and never get the gold which I want so much for my bit of the King's City."

"Faint not, brave boy," answered the Messenger; "you are weary with many hours of toil. See, I have brought you some refreshment," and thus speaking, he lifted the lad into a sitting posture, and unfastening a wallet, spread rare viands before him and a cruse of sparkling water. After the youth had eaten the food and drunk the water, his courage and hope revived again, and before Constanzia had passed out of sight, he had taken up his tools and resumed his work.



## THE BUILDERS

There was a network of passages in a deep part of the mine which went by the name of Via Dolorosa. Some of the finest gold ever discovered had been obtained there. One of the passages, which had rarely been trod, was celebrated for the wonderful nuggets, which a miner had brought from its depths long years before. But he had obtained them through such peril and pain and hardship, that few had been found to follow that way. This Via Dolorosa ran in many directions, at different depths, and in most of the cuttings miners were busy. Some had to work in such low passages that they could not kneel upright, much less stand. Some were so cramped that they could only wield their tools slowly and laboriously. Some groaned as the perspiration poured down their cheeks, some went on with compressed lips and set faces ; some, with beads of sweat standing on their foreheads, chanted songs about the good times they would have when the King came.

## IN THE GOLD MINE

Having explored as much as she desired, Constanzia had a place of work appointed to her, according to the direction sent from the Viceroy. It was too far from the entrance of the mine to go to and fro, so she prepared to stay there, and it was arranged that provisions and needful accessories should be brought to her daily by one of the King's Messengers, who also took the gold obtained to the Treasure House, and entered it to the name of its owner.

She commenced work with courage and hope. It was difficult and toilsome. The rock was hard and the tools were so heavy they blistered her hands, but she held on bravely, rejoicing over each fragment of gold-laden ore which she got safely into her barrow. In the evening when the work was done for the day, other miners often joined her, and they had many a talk together, and many an interesting story was told. The ones that stirred her most were those about the

## THE BUILDERS

Prince's visits to the mine. She knew he often came incognito to the province. She had heard that many a Builder, at some great crisis in his toil or search, had suddenly been aware that the Prince was standing by his side, and had been helped by the wealth of his resource and wisdom and strength into triumphant success, or, if he was in peril, had been brought into safety.

It thrilled her to hear one night that he had actually visited one of her neighbours the previous day, and she listened with rapt attention to the woman's story.

"My place of work is in a passage," said the miner, "where the air is close and hot and I often feel nearly suffocated. Yesterday it seemed more than I could bear, and I thought of sending an urgent message to the King for succour, and to say that without fresh help of some kind, I could not endure it. I was nearly fainting when I heard a footstep, and looking up I saw the Prince by my side. I can't

## IN THE GOLD MINE

describe the wonderful look of compassion and love on his face, he must love his subjects as no royal Master ever did before. He handed me a tablet on which was written in large letters 'The King knows, the King has tidings of you, the King cares, the King will send you help.' "

As she spoke, she took the precious tablet from her bosom and showed it to them. "And," she continued, "as his hand touched mine, the faintness and weakness vanished in an instant, and fresh strength possessed me. He gave me new tools with keener edge, and took away my blunted things, and then with a smile I shall never forget as long as I live, he quickly passed on. To-day I feel a new being. The quartz has been flying from my pick and I have got more treasure out of the rock than I had obtained for weeks before. The remembrance of that visit will always give me fresh courage," she added.

And then another miner, from whose

## THE BUILDERS

worn face there looked out eyes of fire, related how he, too, had had a visit from the Prince.

“It was some time ago,” he said. “I had only just come here to begin work, and much as I coveted the gold for the King’s City, I shrank from getting it. As I was walking down to the distant gallery where work had been appointed to me, I felt the air getting dank and noisome, and an awful loneliness came over me. The passage is a long way from here; there was not a soul near, the glimmer of my lantern only made the darkness more visible, and such a horror came over me that I felt as if I could not go another step. I came to a halt, and then suddenly I felt my hand held in a firm grasp, and to my astonishment I saw the Prince standing by me. He held a bright lamp and his white robe was somehow illuminated by it, for it seemed as if there was nothing but light around him.

“He led me along the gallery and said,

## IN THE GOLD MINE

‘Fear not to go through these paths; I have trodden every one, and know them all.’ Then he showed me where I was to work, and told me that his Messengers would bring plenty of supplies and such sustaining food that I should be strengthened daily for the hard toil. And as he left he bade me not to think of the hardships, but to remember the joy that was on before. And I found it so,” he added. “The provisions, which the King sends to us down here, have great sustaining powers, one can do things that would seem impossible without this food. Now, my work is ended here; I have obtained all the gold I need, and to-morrow I shall reach the daylight and green fields again.”

Some time passed, and Constanzia was happy to know that her store was increasing. One evening, as she rested after accomplishing the task which she set herself daily, a miner from another gallery joined her. As they talked, he told her about a friend of his who had secured

## THE BUILDERS

some pure gold from a cavern, in a distant part of the mine, which could only be reached by a rough and dangerous path. "I prefer to get the gold nearer daylight," he added, "but this fellow so rejoiced in his rich nuggets that when he returned, he seemed unconscious that his feet were wounded and bleeding. I've heard since that his house shines with all the precious things he has brought together by endless toil and hardship — though, indeed, he counts toil and hardship joy when he finds gems which will add to the lustre of the King's City. It is a perfect passion with him."

Constanzia mentally resolved to see if she could not secure some of these pure nuggets. "It is almost a passion with me, too," she thought to herself; "I so ardently want my house to please the King." And she carefully noted the description of the passages, determining some day to follow them.

But from that moment the thought

## IN THE GOLD MINE

followed her day and night; she could not wait, but determined to go off at once to the distant cave. So she rose early one morning and started off, a lamp in one hand, a light strong staff in the other, and across her shoulders a wallet with some food. She went down a path which she had not traversed before. It was straight and monotonous for a long time, then, turning at right angles, it became rough and uneven. Hours passed away, she rested awhile, then tramped on again. The air was dank, the path narrowed, she had to creep in a stooping position. Then came an opening through which she could only just squeeze, and a steep drop on the other side. The path was broader again, and higher than she could measure with the light of her lamp. There was the sound of water trickling, and she went more carefully, feeling her way with the staff.

She suddenly found herself walking on soft sand, and seeing that it filled a recess



## THE BUILDERS

in the rock, she determined to spend the night there; and after eating some food went fast asleep. When she started again, she found the path getting more and more difficult.

Patiently she plodded on. She must be nearly at her bourne now, for she could make out by her lantern that the top of the path arched up. The rocky wall at one side ceased suddenly, and turning a corner she felt her way along a small ledge. It ended abruptly, and Constanzia felt for a foothold, and dropped herself slowly on the stones which she saw below.

Did her foot slip, or did the stone on which she stepped roll from under her? She never knew; she was only conscious that she was slipping down a rocky incline in the darkness, for the lamp escaped from her hand and she could hear it rolling down on the stones. She tried to take hold of something, but in vain—she was going faster and faster, and suddenly she plunged into water. A cry of fear rang

## IN THE GOLD MINE

through the cavern as she sank in the stream. An awful sense of helplessness came over her as she felt the icy waters closing over her head, but a second later she touched the bottom, and came to the surface again.

"The waters are come over me, I am come into deep waters where the floods overflow me," she groaned, as she stretched out her hands in hope of feeling something she could lay hold of, but in vain. Again she sank, but not so deeply, for the stream was carrying her to a shallower place, and this time, when she came to the surface, her outstretched hand came into contact with a rocky edge which she was able to grasp. Clinging to it, she pulled herself along, feeling for a foothold, and the next minute felt ground under her feet. A little further, and she was on dry land, treading on pebbles and sand.

She threw herself down, panting, shaken, bruised, and burst into a flood of tears, weeping her heart out. "I am in darkness

## THE BUILDERS

and the deeps threaten me ; the waterflow will swallow me up ; I am ready to die and there is none to save me," she cried in bitterness of spirit, shutting her eyes and rocking herself to and fro. But suddenly it seemed to her closed eyes that the darkness was not so black as it had been. " No light can come into these depths," she murmured, still rocking to and fro, with her face buried in her hands.

Again, although she did not look up, she felt the gloom was lessening. " Light in this darkness is impossible," she repeated, but this time she glanced up.

Light, yes, indeed, there was light ; the cavern was illuminated with a bright strong glow, falling from a lantern carried by someone in a white robe, who was coming rapidly towards her. A ray from the lamp lit up his face, and Constanzia saw such a wonderful countenance as she had never looked upon before, and knew on the instant that it must be the Prince himself. But she could neither speak nor

## IN THE GOLD MINE

move; she only stretched out both hands to him.

"It is I. Fear nothing; I will help you," he said, and unspeakable solace and hope came to her with the words.

It had never entered Constanzia's mind that in this moment of extremity she might receive such help. Indeed she would have rejected such an idea, thinking herself too commonplace and unworthy to have succour directly from the Prince. Even now she had to glance up again and again to make sure that it was true, and she sobbed afresh, this time with relief and thankfulness. But the sobs ceased as the Prince talked to her.

"I am so bruised," she said, and pointed to a gash on the side of her head, which she had cut against the rocks in her fall, and held out an arm which was torn and bleeding.

"I will bind up your wounds," he answered, and pouring a healing balm into them, he bound them up with skilful

## THE BUILDERS

hand, saying as he did so, "I too have been bruised, and I know, and I feel it for you." Then he beckoned to his attendants and bade them light a fire, for which they had brought materials. Constanzia was gently led to it and while she dried her soaking garments, they prepared a meal.

When it was ready the Prince said, "Come, I will sup with you and you with me."

When she was satisfied and refreshed, she was bidden to rest awhile before starting on the return journey. Every fear had vanished, and with peace and hope and assurance vibrating in her heart, she obeyed, and slept the sweetest sleep she had ever known. She could not remember at first, when she awoke, why she felt such rest in mind as well as in body, but the reason soon came back to her. She arose at once and went to the Prince, who was walking up and down by the side of the stream which had so nearly engulfed her.

## IN THE GOLD MINE

"I will show you the way by which you must go, and guide you along it," he said, and at the same time he gave her his staff, for hers had slipped away together with the lamp, and she started on the dangerous path without a fear or tremor, for no evil could befall her now.

The Prince showed her the ledge of rock by which she had drawn herself out of the water, and as she looked at it she saw something shining, and stooping to pick it up, saw it was a large nugget of gold. Close by was another, and yet another, so large she could hardly lift them.

"Your desire is fulfilled now," the Prince said to her; and it was with deep contentment that she continued on her way, the precious nuggets in the safe keeping of the attendants. She shuddered as she looked at the black waters, and when they mounted the steep declivity down which she had fallen, she had to cling fast to the strong hand that held her, and lean hard

## THE BUILDERS

on the staff as they went slowly up the rocky slope. Although she had not a fear or anxiety she still felt weak from all she had gone through, and she had to muster all her courage to walk steadily on.

They rested now and then, and Constanzia was given bread to eat, and honey, and sparkling water to drink, which revived her like a cordial. They returned by a much shorter way than she had gone, and when they came to smoother paths and reached that part of the mine with which Constanzia was familiar, the Prince said : " I will see you again ; there is joy before you," and with that he passed down another gallery and was lost to view.

She gazed after him till he was out of sight and then went on her way, rejoicing that her prize was won, and that she had only to go on to the daylight and there begin the next stage of work. Right happy was she when she reached the Treasure House, and heard from the lips of the King's Messenger, whose duty it

## IN THE GOLD MINE

was to enter in the books the amount of gold found by each Builder, that she had enough to make her house resplendent with the precious metal.

She took some days of rest, wandering in the green pastures which were in the neighbourhood of the workshops, and reposed amidst the fragrance of the flowers which grew in profusion; she watched the waters of the deep still stream, which meandered through them and gathered luscious fruit from the trees, planted there for the purpose by the King's orders. And she gazed into the glorious blue distance, till, satiated with beauty, and healed and strengthened in body, she was ready to begin work again.

And hard, fierce work it was too. Many a time she felt the scorch of the furnace before the gold was all safely through the fire. Tiles had then to be beaten out, and the gold-leaf prepared, and fittings made for the doors and for other parts of the house. And there was triumph in her



## THE BUILDERS

heart and a glow of joy in her eyes, when, after a long time, these were ready at last, and she started on the return journey to the Great City.

The following months of work were, she thought, the happiest she had ever had. As the roof went up and each tile was riveted into its place, Constanzia exulted in the thought of the King's pleasure in the building, and knew that whatever test might be coming, this little corner of his City would shine with changeless lustre. The interior of the house was decorated with designs to match the outside walls, and when these were finished, Constanzia went another journey to seek for some gems, to add to the title of the Prince, which she had put across the doorway.

That journey was one of the easiest and most successful she had ever had, and she returned with her treasures earlier than she expected, and, when they were ready, fastened them in their place, where they flashed and gleamed in the light.

## IN THE GOLD MINE

"You seem to have nearly finished your house," said a friend, standing near, who was watching her.

"I don't think I shall ever finish," answered she, "I have so many more plans and designs for the inside rooms."

But her work was more nearly finished than she knew, for at that moment a summons was on its way to her from the metropolis. The sun was setting, but there were yet two gems to fasten in their places, and she would not leave her work until it was done.

Now it was complete — that façade, which had cost her so much, was finished, and the hardships and privations, the toil and fatigue, the tears and the pain, seemed as nothing to the satisfaction that the work was worthily accomplished. She gazed up at it once more with her hand on the ladder, and then, hearing voices, turned round, to find one of the King's Messengers standing by her side. He was arrayed in the

## THE BUILDERS

glorious robes worn only at Court. With a smile, he handed a tablet to her, on which was written, "Well done, good and faithful Builder; come and enter into the joy of the King's Household."

"Shall I see the King?" she asked, her face radiant at the thought, "and may I come at once?"

"At once; we have come to fetch you," was the answer. And, as he spoke, the Messenger threw around her a beautiful raiment of needlework, and a cloak of wrought gold, and taking her hand led her to the State chariot which awaited them.

"With gladness and rejoicing shall you be brought, and enter into the King's palace," said he; and it seemed as if the words floated on the breeze while the chariot drove rapidly out of sight.

\* \* \* \*

The next morning it was noised abroad that Constanzia had received a summons from the King, and a knot of people

## IN THE GOLD MINE

gathered in front of her house discussing the news.

"It came just at the right moment, for her work was finished," said one.

"She told me she had plenty more to do," said another, "but I don't see it, for this building is just perfect."

Whilst they talked, two of the Viceroy's attendants approached. "We are going to shut and seal the house till the King comes," they said, but in response to their request the people were first allowed to enter and look at the rooms inside. The work there was as complete and artistic as on the outside, and loud were the praises of each one as they passed through. There was delicate tracery round the walls, and here and there lovely clusters of sculptured flowers and birds; and over one chief doorway a large star of crystals gleamed and scintillated in the light.

"If all the work was like this, the King's City would be the most glorious

## THE BUILDERS

ever heard of, when it is finished," said one of the Builders as he went out; "but I fear me a great deal of it is poor stuff compared to this beautiful house."

And the beautiful house had work to do still, for it gave inspiration and incentive to many a passer-by, who built his own house the more worthily for gazing at its harmony of design, its richness and completeness of detail.

The door was shut, and the Viceroy's seal—the dove with the wings outstretched—was affixed to it. And the house stood in the light, and the gold glittered, and the gems gleamed; and the work, so well done, stood waiting and ready for the glad day when the King and the Prince should enter the City.

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE STRANGERS.

ONE day two men were seen coming rapidly up one of the main roads to the City. They ran for a few steps now and then, panting so hard that it seemed as if they had run till they could run no more. Occasionally they glanced behind as if afraid that they were followed.

When they passed the entrance they halted and drew a long breath. "We are in safety at last," said one of them. "Little as I know, I have heard this much, that once we are inside the Rocky Citadel, no foe can touch us."

"Yes," said the other; "but I heard also that those who enter its gates must share in the building of the City. We must start at once, somewhere or other,

## THE BUILDERS

for, woe to us if we are turned out of this place of safety," and he shuddered as if a dread vision had crossed his mind.

"Let us look about quickly, then," answered his friend, and they turned down a side road, and yet another, and another, till they saw a plot of land not yet appropriated by any citizen.

"Look, we can start here," said he. "We are in luck, for there are tools lying about, and fencing that someone has finished with. Let us begin at once." And so they did, working like slaves. They marked out lines for the walls of their proposed buildings, set up the fencing, and when the last paling was in place, looked with much satisfaction at their progress.

"We are in possession, at all events," said one of them, "and I believe the Builders are a kind lot of people, and will let us remain whether we have a right to or not. Are you not dreadfully hungry?" he asked.

## THE STRANGERS

"Yes, starving," answered the other, and pointing to someone across the road, he added, "Do you see that man returning with cakes of bread in his hands? He passed up the path a few minutes ago. Let us see if we can also get provisions from that direction."

In five minutes they reached one of the Royal Storehouses, and the open door revealed every kind of delicious bread, and an attendant who was dispensing it.

"How much is your bread?" asked one of the strangers, proffering a coin as he spoke.

The attendant looked at him. "These are the King's provisions," he answered, "and are to be had without money and without price; and even if they could be bought it would not be with this, for it is no coin of the realm."

The man's face fell. "Will you take this then?" he said. "I want food badly," and he handed him a gold piece.



## THE BUILDERS

"This is not the King's coinage either," said the attendant, examining it, and reading aloud the inscription, "and it is not stamped with his name. It cannot pass here, but if you have the King's Token everything is at your service."

"The King's Token," repeated the man, "what is that?"

"It is a gift that the Viceroy bestows upon each citizen, when his name is entered on the Royal Muster Roll. You must be a foreigner and stranger to know nought of these customs."

The man shivered. "I only arrived this morning," he answered. "I heard that all were welcome to work here, and I've begun already on a plot of land yonder. Surely you will help me and give me some food?"

"The King's commands must be obeyed," said the attendant, "and his orders are that every citizen must see the Viceroy, and receive his Token before he can enjoy the privileges of this City.

## THE STRANGERS

Go to his Palace at once and ask to see him ; he receives all who come."

"I am afraid to," replied the stranger, and his voice sank as he whispered, "I have been a rebel."

"So were many of those who are now loyal citizens," said the attendant, encouragingly. "I advise you go at once to the great Chief, and you will find such a welcome as you never dreamed could be your lot."

"I have not courage to go, and I don't know the way," was the response.

"Any of the Builders will gladly guide you," said the attendant.

"Do ask one of them," said the man desperately.

The attendant went to the door and hailed a man and woman who were passing.

"Fortis" (for it was he), "will you and your sister take these strangers to the Viceroy? They want to be entered on the Royal Muster Roll, but don't know how to set about it."

## THE BUILDERS

"Of course we will, with pleasure," was the answer, and they all moved off together. But a new anxiety came into the minds of the strangers as they compared themselves with their guides, and they had not gone far when one of them said, "Sir, would you help us to get a bit tidier before we present ourselves at the Palace? Our raiment is stained and worn, and we would fain wash and repair it first."

"You are right," answered Fortis; "but those clothes could never be made presentable. At the lodge of the Palace you will find everything prepared for your use—new clothes, everything you can desire, will be supplied by the Royal attendants."

But they were not satisfied, they begged Fortis to wait while they tried to wash away some of the dust and dirt. It was quite in vain, however: their clothes looked none the better; on the contrary, several new rents had appeared. They gave it up after a while, and reluctantly

## THE STRANGERS

followed their guides, and as they neared the gates their steps grew slower and slower.

"I can't go any further," said one of them. "You little dream who we are, or you would know that we are unworthy to enter those gates. We are rebels of the deepest dye. For years we have aided and abetted the Adversary in his opposition to our liege Lord, and it was only because his rule had become intolerable, and he threatened our lives, that we fled for refuge to the City. We thought we could have done some work there, and then have sued for pardon. I dare not go straight to the Viceroy just as I am."

"Nor I," said the other; "every moment the enormity of my offence seems greater. What reason has the King to pardon me? Why should he not imprison and punish me as I deserve?"

"The magnificence of his clemency and love is one reason, and the Prince's intercession is another," answered Fortis.

## THE BUILDERS

“He has asked that every rebel who surrenders may be pardoned and received back into favour, and the King has granted his petition.”

But the strangers still hung back. They trembled with fear, and one of them broke into a sweat, beads of perspiration standing on his forehead.

“What shall we do?” he said, in an agitated voice. “If we turn back, the Adversary will take our lives; he threatened us with vengeance if we dared to leave his ranks. There is death behind,” and his voice sank to a whisper, “and judgment before.”

“There is life and riches before, if only you will enter those gates,” answered Fidelitas. “You must come,” and she seized the arm of one of the men, and Fortis the other, and half led and half dragged them along.

The gates were wide open, and one of the King’s Messengers stood in the entry. When he saw them approaching, he went

## THE STRANGERS

towards them with words of welcome. But the men seemed hardly conscious of what he said. Fear and apprehension possessed them; fatigue and hunger had exhausted them; and with a heartrending cry, "May the King have mercy upon me," the younger of the two fell fainting on the threshold. The other threw himself by his side in an attitude of supplication. "Cast us not out," he said beseechingly.

"No, you won't be cast out; our Sovereign has ordered that whoever comes to this gate shall be allowed to enter in," said the King's Messenger, in kindest tones, and together with another of the attendants, he gently lifted the fainting man into a room, which opened out of the entrance porch, while others led in his comrade. They administered a cordial to both of them and said, "Fear not, neither be afraid; for great are the King's pity and mercy."

With that they set before them grapes,

## THE BUILDERS

and cakes of bread, and water fresh from the spring, and when they had partaken of these the men revived. New courage was imparted to them also by the kind looks and words. Not a single reproach was levelled at them, for such was the King's command to his servants—though they hated and detested rebellious deeds against him.

“Will you show us how to get rid of these stains and dirt?” asked the men, with more confidence.

They were led into rooms where everything they could desire was laid ready.

“Your garments are not suitable for citizens of our King,” said one of the Messengers; “they are only fit for the dunghill. See, here are clothes, woven at the Royal looms, of finest texture and of priceless fabric. Wash in these fountains, and afterward clothe yourselves.”

They were transformed indeed, when they reappeared. Their whole mien was changed; hope was in their countenances,

## THE STRANGERS

and fire in their eyes, and a joyful assurance in their voices, as they asked where they might take the oath of allegiance.

They were shown into a room on the opposite side of the gateway, and handed the usual formula. In voices trembling with emotion they each repeated it, adding of their own accord, "For our transgressions are with us, and as for our rebellions, we know them—in transgressing and lying against the King, and departing away from our Prince, speaking revolt and uttering from the heart words of falsehood—but henceforth we will delight ourselves in his commandments and obey his orders."

They were next taken to the Palace, and brought into the Presence Chamber, where alone names could be entered on the Royal Muster Roll. And the next moment they found themselves standing in front of the great Viceroy. Wonder was mixed with gratitude when they heard



## THE BUILDERS

from his lips, not only that pardon had come for them from the King's august Majesty, but that he had been kept fully informed of their past movements, and knew everything about their vigorous partisanship with the Adversary, their awakening to the oppression of his rule, their flight from his threats of death, and their escape to the City.

"And now," he added, "as I have told you of the past I will also tell you of the future, that you are called, and chosen, and faithful. Called to be law-abiding and obedient citizens; chosen to share in the great work of building the City for the King, to be faithful in the least as also in the greatest, and if need be, faithful unto death." And then the priceless Tokens were given into their hands, which trembled with eagerness as they grasped them, and the Viceroy said, "That which ye now receive, hold fast till the King comes. Receive also the riches of the assurance of his favour," and thus speaking he

## THE STRANGERS

threw round the neck of each man a chain of finest workmanship.

They tried to express their thanks, but speech failed them, and they could only look up mutely to their Chief, who understood that their silence said more than words. There was exultation in their tread as they left the hall. And it seemed as if, at that moment, the palace musicians, whose strains could be heard in the distance, broke suddenly into chords of triumph, and that voices joined in a rapture of harmony, "Rejoice, for the Prince has received his own."

To the end of their lives they could never recall that interview without a thrill of love and devotion, at the thought of the penetration and perfect understanding of the Viceroy, the regal forgiveness of the King, and the unmerited trust and confidence of the Prince.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### A VISIT TO THE ALIEN TOWN.

**T**IME was passing, and the Buildings were steadily rising and giving promise indeed of a great and glorious City.

But while, in some of the streets, only praise and admiration could be given to the workers, there were others in which the progress seemed strangely slow. In the midst of one such road was a house which was going up quickly, and far out-topped its neighbours; a group of people were always to be seen standing round it. Philautus was the name of the owner; he was tall and of commanding appearance, and it was with apparent ease that he swung his materials into place.

## A VISIT TO THE ALIEN TOWN

Yet it seemed as if he always required people at hand to talk, advise, or admire his doings.

As already mentioned, each citizen was to build his own house, and might not receive assistance, as far as preparing and placing the materials was concerned. Apart from this, the Builders not only might, but were exhorted to help, and lend a hand to each other if possible. At the same time it was understood that no one should hinder a neighbour in his building.

Philautus gesticulated a great deal as he pointed out to his friends the merits of his design, and the excellence of his work, and he kept them all busy in attendance fetching things he required, or handing him tools.

"Our houses won't get on much at this rate," said one of them.

"You will be rewarded," he answered, "for this house is in the centre of the street, and its height and magnificence

## THE BUILDERS

will bring fame to you all, because you are my neighbours."

"Bring fame to you?" echoed a Master-Builder, who was passing. "Are we not working that this City may extol the King's fame? It won't be to his liking to have some houses high and lofty and some not finished when he comes. Get on with your own buildings," he advised, turning to the group, "instead of wasting your time here."

But the tall Builder expostulated, urging that all his neighbours were concerned in his progress, that they liked to assist him, and that their work was of less importance than his own. However the Master-Builder held to his point, and little by little the people slipped away, and left him and Philautus together. After gazing at the house, the former asked, "Have you tested your wall there?" and he pointed to an angle that even an inexperienced eye might have seen was faulty.

## A VISIT TO THE ALIEN TOWN

"My work requires no testing," answered Philautus, loftily.

"Come down here and look for yourself," said the Master-BUILDER; "see here and here," and he pointed to flaws in the structure which were only too evident. "Are you following the Viceroy's design?" he asked. "It does not look like one of his making."

"Partly," answered Philautus, "and partly my own. It will work out all right when it is finished," he added confidently.

"On the contrary, those structural defects will develop further if you go on without remedying them," replied the Master-BUILDER. "Ask the Viceroy to come and inspect the building and advise you, or you may have bitter disappointment later."

"I have no fear of disappointment," Philautus replied. "The Viceroy has given his orders and I'm following them accurately and carefully, as well as adding to them." There was such immovable

## THE BUILDERS

complacency in the tone that the Master-Builder went on his way without saying another word.

The next morning Philautus came to work earlier than usual. He had felt disturbed by the warning of the previous day, though he would not allow it, and waking before it was light, he walked up to his house. With the first rays of the sun shining upon him, he was scanning and measuring each part where the Master-Builder had indicated faults. Every moment as he did so, he became more convinced that his monitor was mistaken, and that all the calculations and plans were correct.

Everything was very still. No other citizen was at work yet, and the voices of the birds and the murmur of the waters seemed scarcely to break the silence. The hour was full of peace and of anticipation of what the day might bring forth. The Builder leant against the paling with a smile of re-assurance on his face. Sud-

## A VISIT TO THE ALIEN TOWN

denly he felt a touch on his shoulder, and looking up saw the Viceroy standing by his side with a plumb-line in his hand.

He instantly saluted, and then stood silent. The expression, which flashed across his face for a second, revealed an annoyance at this unexpected visit, to which he would not have confessed, and which he little knew was so evident. In gracious accents the Viceroy asked that he would guide him round his building. He spoke kind words of commendation as he pointed to the foundation, well and securely set in the Living Rock. As they went on he tested the work here and there, each time demonstrating the defects which were only too visible. While he stood upon the wall with the plumb-line in his hand, he bade the Builder note them, and take knowledge that his walls were not straight and sound.

"I measured them this morning, Sire, and have proved them straight," Philautus answered sullenly.



## THE BUILDERS

"With unerring judgment I lay the line, and with rightness the plummet. See to it that you repair these errors, or great will be your loss and sorrow," was the answer in a low, firm voice.

"The Royal orders are with me, and I have followed them, as the well-laid foundation shows," answered Philautus again.

"I have not found your work perfect," replied the Viceroy, and his voice was stern as he turned away abruptly and left him.

All that day Philautus did little work. He spent his time in again measuring and testing his walls, and except at one angle, where he admitted a defect, he found, what he was determined to find, that they were all right. He paid no heed to what he might well have known—that his own plumb-line was slightly bent, not much, but enough to make its testing unreliable.

He pulled down a few stones from the one spot which he acknowledged was faulty.

## A VISIT TO THE ALIEN TOWN

He could not do this alone, however ; he needed friends and neighbours to discuss the matter with, and he summoned any who would come, vaunting his thoroughness in repairing so small a flaw, but saying naught of the Viceroy's visit and reproof. Indeed, by the time the corner of the wall had been rebuilt he had persuaded himself that all defects were repaired.

Had he no misgivings ? Did the words and voice of the Viceroy never sound again in his ears ?

One day he started in good spirits to one of the quarries, accompanied as usual by any Builders whom he could persuade to leave their own work to help his. They had not gone far when they were accosted by one of the inhabitants of a neighbouring town. For it must be related how the fame of the King's Glorious City had spread far and wide, and that many people, who did not care to share the great enterprise, had yet been inspired by the sight of

## THE BUILDERS

the busy workers to start building a town of their own, for which they had chosen a site about a day's journey distant. They sent two or three of their leaders to spy out the work of the King's Builders, and then to draw up designs for them to copy. The consequence was that the appearance of their town had a likeness, at first sight, to the great City, a likeness which deceived many a passer-by, but which vanished on close inspection. Instead of marble sculptured into exquisite designs, there were rough carvings on painted wood; instead of precious stones, pretence gems of glass or paste; instead of pure silver and gold, base and common metal. But the worst part about the town was the character of its inhabitants. They were not active rebels, yet they were opponents of the King's Government. They were scornful of the great City, and they willingly hindered the work, whenever they could devise a plan to do it.

It was a man from this town who met

## A VISIT TO THE ALIEN TOWN

Philautus and his friends, and invited them to come with him.

"Shall we go and see the place for ourselves?" Philautus asked. "I have often heard of it, but never been there."

"No," answered one of them; "if you are going there I shall return to my own work," and so saying, he went off, followed by all except one young man, who was a special friend.

"Then you and I will go and have a look," said the Builder, and they accompanied the stranger, who offered them hospitality for the night, as it was too far to return that day, and he expatiated on the place as they went along. Next morning, when they began to explore the town, they were both surprised to see that it was laid out on the same plan as the Royal City, with walls, gateways, and broad streets leading up to an important-looking building in the centre. There was plenty of colour, plenty of sound, and bands were

## THE BUILDERS

playing, but the roads were dusty and littered with rubbish and débris.

“Why don’t you keep the place clean?” asked the Builder.

“What does it matter?” answered the guide; “the refuse is cleared away often enough, but the people always throw out more.”

The townsmen stared rudely at the Builders as they walked along. Their uniform, of course, marked them as citizens of the great City—not that it was as clean as it should have been, but even when soiled it could not be mistaken—and some youths jeered as they passed, inviting them to take it off and come to live in their town. But the guide retorted upon them, and prayed the Builders to pay no attention to them. He led his guests along, pointing out the chief things of interest. Presently they entered some large buildings, where they found a number of people at work, cutting, carving, and painting blocks of wood.

“We have to manufacture our building

## A VISIT TO THE ALIEN TOWN

materials," said the guide, "for, as you know, it is not permitted to get supplies from the Crown property without the King's Token, which none of us possess, as we won't take the oath of allegiance. So we have to imitate the materials which you employ, and you see we are not a whit behind you. Indeed I admire this clever workmanship far more than anything I have seen in your City," and so saying he pointed to a series of blocks, loosely piled together, so that their general scheme of ornament could be made out.

To Philautus' intense indignation he recognised his own pattern and design.

"Where did you get that from?" he asked, in an angry voice.

"I copied it from one in the City that took my fancy," answered the guide, with a grin.

"So you have been in our City? I thought you would not set foot in it," responded the Builder.

## THE BUILDERS

"We must spy out your ways sometimes," was the answer, "or how could we imitate you so well? I went there once and sketched that on my return; you see how well I remembered it."

"Too well," said the Builder wrathfully.

"Many of the houses," continued the man, had such beauty of design, such delicate detail that they were quite beyond me; but I picked out one here and there which had not a master-touch, and we are copying them exactly." And he added insinuatingly, "Perhaps our work may be useful to you, too; we could let you have some of these very blocks if you like—they would save you a lot of trouble, and would look admirable worked into your walls."

"No, thank you; that is the last idea I should entertain," Philautus answered, but there was a wavering note in his voice which the guide was quick to perceive.

## A VISIT TO THE ALIEN TOWN

"You can think it over," said he, and a little later, after they had been the round of the town, when he brought them back to the manufactories, the Builder asked to look again at the blocks in question. After talking and gazing at them, he chose a number which he thought would answer his purpose, and offered to buy them. Not only so, but he advised his friend to look about and choose what would suit his building, which, after some demur, he did.

While they walked back, his friend advanced various objections to these dealings with men who, whatever they might claim to be, were certainly not their King's faithful subjects. But all his objections were overruled.

"The materials are really a great find," said Philautus. "They will enable me to add at least one story to my house. I shall now be able to make it as lofty as I desired, and these materials won't show; they will all be built in to the back



## THE BUILDERS

walls, or the interior, while all the front will be of good sound marble."

And so it came to pass that altogether new elements were introduced into these houses, and that of Philautus went up faster and higher than those of his neighbours. He made arrangements by which anything he wanted was brought regularly from the Alien Town to a place where it could be transferred to him. On one occasion a Master-Builder, who met him there, represented that this was not material worthy of the King's City, but Philautus would none of his advice; his house was rising quickly, and that was all he cared for now.

Time passed, the roof was on, and the Builder one evening collected his friends—as usual—to admire the structure with him. Everything was perfect and superior to the work of others, he said, and much to the same effect.

"It may be imposing, but it is not a safe structure to live in," said a Builder

## A VISIT TO THE ALIEN TOWN

with flashing eyes, who happened to be passing from another part of the City.

Philautus took no notice.

"I wish our houses were making fast progress, too," said one of his neighbours. "Perhaps now you have nearly finished, we shall have a chance of getting on. You won't be calling us at all hours to help you."

The group separated to their own homes. The clouds were lowering, and the wind began to moan as a storm drew near. Philautus entered his house, and lit a lamp, and again wandered through it contemplating his handiwork. And as he looked, misgivings suddenly poured into his mind. Was it, after all, so well and truly built as he maintained? The gale was still rising, it whistled round the house, the windows shook, the boards creaked. He went upstairs. Could it be that the building shook when a violent gust rattled against it?

## THE BUILDERS

His misgivings deepened. Yes, he had noticed that some of those roof timbers, supplied from the Alien Town, were worm-eaten under the paint, and that some were too slender for the purpose. Why had he adopted them so willingly? And then there flashed through his vision the visit of the Viceroy, and the low, quiet voice sounded again in his ears, "I have not found your work perfect."

What would the Great Chief say now if he inspected the building? Would he be any better satisfied? Nay, rather would he not be much more dissatisfied? What would he say to all that material which had not been obtained from the Crown Lands?

As Philautus pondered, his self-glorification was exchanged for an awful fear, lest, after all, his vaunted building should bring to him shame and loss.

"But I can repair my folly," he said aloud. "If I can build, I can unbuild and rectify my errors."

## A VISIT TO THE ALIEN TOWN

Again the house shook. He went downstairs.

What was that sound? Was it a knock at the door? Impossible, no one was about at this hour.

Again, an unmistakable knock. He went to the door and, as he opened it, the wind rushed in and extinguished his lamp. A King's Messenger was there with a lantern in his hand. Without a word, he handed the Builder the King's summons to come at once to the metropolis.

"Not to-night," said the Builder, shrinking back. "My work is not nearly finished."

"Our Sovereign's order brooks no delay," answered the Messenger.

"At least wait till I wash my clothes," said Philautus beseechingly.

"We have a new and beautiful court dress for you here," answered the Messenger; and so speaking, he and his companion arrayed him in a shining robe, led

## THE BUILDERS

him forth to the waiting chariot, and instantly drove away to the capital and palace of the great Potentate and Ruler.

\* \* \* \* \*

The gale continued for several days, and work had to be more or less suspended. When it had ceased and the Builders went again to their occupations, they were surprised not to see Philautus striding along; he had always been so much in evidence. But a greater surprise was in store. Where was the lofty building which dominated their road, and in which they had been told their own fame was concerned? They hastened to the place they knew so well. Was this the famed house, this ruin that stood in front of them?—the roof in fragments on the ground, the walls cracked and tottering, only the marble front and the foundations standing?

Faces blanched as they gazed at the wreckage, and questions which rose to many lips remained unasked, as the news

## A VISIT TO THE ALIEN TOWN

went round that the owner was not there, because he had been summoned by the King. One of the group, who knew, more than most, about the material that had been used in that house, trembled as he gazed at the havoc that one storm had wrought, trembled so that his legs would hardly bear him as he hurried to his own building.

"Was it damaged too?" he asked anxiously.

Yes, one wall was injured, the wall into which he had built slight and worthless blocks of imitation stone. He beckoned a friend, and choking with misery and grief pointed to it without a word.

"Get your axe, man," said the friend, after a few minutes' inspection, "and hack out every bit of that worthless stuff you have mixed in with your polished stone. It may be that you will have time to rebuild with materials from the King's Lands." And the young man obeyed.

With what carefulness he hewed down

## THE BUILDERS

every scrap that had come from the Alien Town, with what care he cleared it all away and destroyed it! The sorrow with which he went to the Viceroy to tell him about his folly, and ask his advice and direction, the indignation with which he ever thought of his disobedience to Royal Orders, and the vehement desire with which he started again on the work, need not be recorded in detail, nor yet the success and joy which crowned his toil on that day, long after, when he received the approval of his King and Prince.

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE VILLAGE OF TRUMPETS.

**I**N another road, near that in which were the houses described in the last chapter, a woman named Egoista was busy at work.

She was enthusiastic about it, and talked often of the beauty of her design and the choiceness of the materials she was using. She certainly had begun a most attractive building, the foundation was securely laid in the rock, and the first row of sculptured stones gave promise of an artistic façade. Gave promise! Ah, if all the houses that gave promise at first had fulfilled their promise to the end! How many blemishes that Royal City would have been spared!

This Builder had for neighbour a very



## THE BUILDERS

quiet worker, also a woman, Persis by name. She spoke little of her design or plan, nor did she need to, for the house spoke for itself. Nor was it necessary to see her speeding down to the Viceroy's Palace to know that she constantly consulted him, for the impress of his matchless skill was on every detail.

Egoista was much too self-confident to imitate her neighbour in this respect. She thought her interpretation of the general Orders was unimpeachable. Indeed she rather rallied her friend on this habit of continual reference to the Great Chief. But a quiet smile was the only answer she got, and the successful plan was adhered to as closely as before. The worst part was that Egoista seemed actually annoyed when she gazed at the skilful work next door, and her face was overcast with frowns, whenever she discerned some new progress or some new unfolding of the beautiful design. For herself, she soon got tired of hewing and

## THE VILLAGE OF TRUMPETS

chiselling the hard marble, and wondered whether she could not invent something new that would build into her house satisfactorily.

"If I could only invent some new patent material, easy to manipulate, I should make my name, and at the same time render service to everyone," she told herself. "I would let the other Builders use it, and they would all be grateful to me."

Thus meditating, she set forth one day, and soon leaving the well-trodden roads to the Crown Lands, she followed unknown paths, and plunged into a thick wood. She wandered on all day, and when night came, put up at a solitary inn, which she suddenly came upon in a forest clearing. The inn-keeper, next morning, informed her that if she wanted novelties, she could not do better than follow a path, which he indicated, to a curious village. "You will know when you are getting near it," he added, "for there is always

## THE BUILDERS

such a noise going on there that you can hear it far away."

Egoista followed his instructions, and after a long tramp, late in the afternoon, she heard sounds that told her she must be nearing the place of her quest. There was such a din that she wondered what could be happening—trumpets blowing, horns clashing, drums banging, a regular uproar. Turning a corner she came in sight of a place different to anything she had seen before. Every house was painted in some bright colour, and the colours clashed painfully; they had evidently been selected without any reference to general effect, and gave an inharmonious, jarring impression. But the most curious thing was that each of the inhabitants carried a musical instrument, and, as soon as the Builder came in sight, the noise, which had been loud enough before, was positively deafening. All of them began to blow as hard as they could on trumpet or horn, as the case might be.

## THE VILLAGE OF TRUMPETS

She could not hear a word that was said to her, and could only follow a woman who beckoned, and led her into a house; but the door had to be shut before she could make out a syllable. Then to her astonishment, the woman, who apparently intended to be her hostess, blew a blast on her trumpet after each sentence. Egoista was much pleased, however, to be offered hospitality and a welcome as long as she liked to stay. But she did not know how much purpose there was behind this hospitality. Of course she had been recognised at once as a Builder of the Great City, and as the headman had received orders to introduce their peculiar handiwork there, if possible, this woman, who was his wife, saw her chance and instantly resolved to use it. She and her husband were obsequious to Egoista, gave her of their best, took her about, and showed her everything in the village. She was delighted with it all. There was one drawback only: the water-supply was

## THE BUILDERS

bad and so deficient that sometimes the people suffered from thirst.

"We cannot get good water anywhere near," the headman explained. "There are no springs, so we have hewn out cisterns, but there is always some flaw, and again and again we have gone and found no water in them. It has somehow leaked away."

As Egoista listened, her thoughts went back to the streams of rushing water in the Great City, but she said nothing. She was so attracted to the village that she was determined at present to put up with anything, even bad water if necessary.

She settled down for a long visit, and the villager took her about and introduced her to all the people, who showed her their handicrafts. These were what the Builder particularly wanted to see, for the villagers had all sorts of reed and wicker industries, which she saw might be adapted to her purpose.

The walls of all the houses were made

## THE VILLAGE OF TRUMPETS

of a kind of cane-work, wattled inside with plaster, and thatched with reed or straw, all the materials being stained or painted bright colours, and worked into fantastic designs. They took the Builder's fancy immensely, and she busied herself side by side with the workers and learnt exactly how to imitate them. In course of time when she had mastered the art she bought a good supply of materials, and set off on her return journey to the Royal City.

Her new friends would not permit her to leave without a trumpet. She had grown accustomed to their habit of constantly blowing these instruments, and had got to like it rather, so she started away, trumpet in hand, blowing a farewell blast as she turned down the forest glade that hid the village from sight. And all the way she amused herself off and on by playing upon it. But after she reached the main road and was within sight of the City, it somehow failed to be such a pleas-

## THE BUILDERS

ing occupation ; and when some acquaintances joined her, on their way from one of the marble quarries, she suddenly felt rather shy as she noted their looks of disapproval.

“ If you want a trumpet,” they asked, “ why don’t you get one of the King’s silver ones instead of that discordant thing ? ”

“ It is not in the least discordant,” she answered, and hurried away from them.

But her neighbours adhered to their opinion. From the moment of her return they were sorely tried, for that trumpet, pitched so that it made discord with every instrument in the City, was blown frequently. They found that it was useless to say a word, so they could only endure it. The trumpet was not the only surprise that Egoista gave to her friends, for shortly after her return they saw bright-coloured bundles of cane and reeds and thatch arriving. And later, a strange design for

## THE VILLAGE OF TRUMPETS

the walls slowly appeared ; it was of wicker-work painted in bizarre patterns.

A Master-BUILDER, astonished at this mode of building, came and examined the structure, but it was in vain that he suggested the unsuitableness of the materials that she had chosen. "Study to show yourself approved by the Viceroy," he said, "and a workman that does not need to be ashamed. If you continue to use this stuff you will not be approved by him, but on the contrary you will be ashamed of such rubbish."

It was in vain to say a word. Egoista had chosen her materials and she intended to keep to them. And more than that, she did her best, and with some success, to get some of her young neighbours to adopt the same methods. While she obstinately followed her own way, she could not help, in her heart of hearts, admiring the house of her neighbour Persis, and the skilful devices by which malachite, green fluor spar, and other



## THE BUILDERS

precious stone in varying shades of the same colour, had been worked into rich designs with the white marble. The roof was just begun, and as she stood gazing at it in the moonlight one evening, after the Builders had left their work, she could see one of the hollow bronze beams hanging on a pulley at one end, while the other was resting in its niche.

It flashed through her mind that it would be easy to injure the work, and quick as thought she climbed up, and seizing a tool lying near she severed the rope, and the next instant the beam crashed down to the floor below, hurling down another one also in its descent. Having surveyed her mischief with a look of exultation, she swung herself down and went off. The next day when Persis came to her work, this havoc suddenly broke on her vision; the song on her lips died away, and she stood for a moment transfixed. She could not believe her eyes. Were these the beams which she had

## THE VILLAGE OF TRUMPETS

taken such trouble to obtain and get into place?

"An enemy has done this," were her first words. At the same moment she heard the footsteps of the royal workmen, who had been helping her with the roof—there were always such assistants at hand for any work beyond the strength of the Builders. She pointed in silence to the damage done, for her voice was choked.

They were indignant at such deliberate mischief. "Who has done it?" they asked—a question which could not be answered. None of the neighbours had seen or heard anyone go to the house, and Egoista was not to be found, so it was supposed that she had gone to pay another visit to the village in the forest. No light could be thrown on the occurrence by anybody.

"It is a curious thing, even if someone has a grudge against you," said a King's Messenger, standing near, "that he or she should show it in this way, and injure

## THE BUILDERS

a bit of the King's City. This house is not private property; it is his property, a building for his pleasure."

Indignation and disappointment could not undo the damage, and there was nothing for it but to get the bent and twisted beams back to the workshop for repair.

Time passed on, and Egoista was seen now and then at her work, but she always avoided her neighbour, and though Persis wanted to ask if Egoista could throw any light on the mishap, she never got an opportunity of doing so. The wicker-work house was getting on quickly. A curious roof had been erected, the doors were up, and Egoista talked as if her task would soon be completed. She was extremely proud of it, and plumed herself constantly on having discovered a new method of work, new material, and a new design.

One night she was there very late. She had been reckoning what materials she

## THE VILLAGE OF TRUMPETS

needed to order from the village, and thought with complacency that only one or two more loads would be required. After one last glance of satisfaction she extinguished her lamp, and was stepping to the door, when suddenly the room was brilliantly illuminated. Astonishment and awe rushed over her as she recognised the Viceroy standing by her side, with a powerful light in his hand. He did not speak a word, but flashed it round the rooms, and as he did so every nook and cranny was revealed, every detail stood out clearly and unmistakably. As the rays played round in every direction, the Builder, for the first time, saw what flimsy and contemptible materials she had used. The words, which rose to her lips, died away; the trumpet, which was in her hand, fell to the ground, and she stood speechless and motionless.

No sound broke the stillness, the light played round, above, below, on every side, and then the Viceroy, without speaking,

## THE BUILDERS

turned and departed, and she stood alone in the darkness.

She sank down on the floor, alarmed, trembling, moved to the very depths.

How long she had lain there she did not know, when she heard someone moving outside. The door opened, and by the faint star-light she saw a figure enter.

"Who is that?" she cried.

"A friend," was the answer, and she recognised the voice as belonging to a villager from the forest, whom she knew very well. "I had orders to slip over here in the dark," he continued, "to tell you about a new kind of palm-leaf fibre which we have received from a distance, and which will be just what you need to finish the interior of your rooms."

"I shan't want it now," answered Egoista. "I fear I have made a great mistake in using your goods at all," and she went on to recount what had happened that night, and the alarm

## THE VILLAGE OF TRUMPETS

which the Viceroy's visit had given to her.

The villager did not contradict her, but asked to have a lamp lit and these serious defects pointed out to him. It was soon lighted, and its small, dull rays turned on the room. It looked very different under this inspection; the rough materials, the imperfect work, were hardly visible, and the former confidence and satisfaction began to revive in the heart of Egoista as she gazed about, listening at the same time to the encouragement and eulogy poured into her willing ears. But still she would not give an immediate order for the wares which he pressed.

"I must have time to think about it. I am not at all sure that I shall not throw over your goods and begin to use something more solid," she said; "I could easily put in a marble flooring, and the Viceroy would like that better than the wooden bricks I have prepared." The villager could get no other answer.

## THE BUILDERS

For several days Egoista shut herself up. She was in an uncertain and despondent mood. One moment she recalled the Viceroy's visit and mentally saw his lamp flashing on her work, and the next she solaced herself with the remembrance of her friend's praises. The latter did not leave her to her solitude, he persisted in his purpose, and after several visits in which he displayed consummate skill and flattery, he left with an order for a supply of palm-leaf fibre.

Ah! if she could have seen that friend, a little later, talking to the Adversary, and telling him he had obeyed his orders to make sure that the Builder, who was so enamoured of his trumpery materials, did not change her mind! If she could have seen the Adversary's look of triumph, and have heard the sneer with which he said that at least one bit of the City would be defaced! But she saw and heard neither.

The dazzling light of that midnight

## THE VILLAGE OF TRUMPETS

visit gradually faded from her mind. By the time that a load of palm-fibre was brought to her, she was quite ready to begin work on it. And a little later she might have been seen again on her way to the village in the forest, seeking another supply of the same material. On her return she was busy upon it for many a day, plaiting rough hangings to finish the interior of the house; and as she worked there lay by her side, ready to hand, her trumpet.



## CHAPTER X.

### SEEKING GEMS FROM THE NORTH PLATEAU.

**I**N the main avenue leading from the great gates on the east of the City to the Royal Palace, the buildings were making good progress. Some were finished, some were nearing completion.

The Viceroy had assigned these sites, with his unerring insight, to those who faithfully obeyed the Royal Orders, and his magnificent design for the whole was beginning to come into sight. Around each house was a garden, and when finished, these were filled with flowers planted in green turf. No fences divided them, so they made an unbroken vista of beauty. Flanking the paths which

## GEMS FROM THE PLATEAU

bordered them were streams flowing down from the grounds of the Palace, where springs burst out in natural fountains from the rock. By them were planted trees of choice foliage and fruit, amongst which birds of bright plumage and lovely song had made their home.

From the avenue, several roads branched to right and left. In one of these a Builder was busy at a corner house. He was of striking appearance, with a determined face and a mouth which spoke of gentleness as well as strength, and eyes which could flash fire. He was on the roof fastening the last tile of gold, and with a sigh of satisfaction looked at the work completed, and then slowly descended the ladder. When he reached the ground, he gazed at the front of the house and then paced up and down in deep meditation. Here and there in the façade were places fastened over with temporary coverings, evidently waiting for completion.

## THE BUILDERS

"I shall have to go off now," he said aloud, "and journey far afield until I find the rare stones and gems which must fill those gaps. But first I must go to the Viceroy and consult him."

The words had hardly passed his lips when he saw the Great Chief approaching. With delighted face, he saluted, and then requested an inspection of the building. The request was willingly granted and the Viceroy went carefully round each part of it, speaking many words of praise and approval, and advising about those details still remaining to be finished.

"I have left those blank spaces for the designs sketched in the plan you gave me, my Lord," said Fidus, for such was the Builder's name. "A cross there," he continued, pointing to one of them, "and another here, and a cluster of diadems above each, which must flash with the rarest gems, for they are to speak of the Prince's Kingdom and dominion."

## GEMS FROM THE PLATEAU

"One day," said the Viceroy, turning to a group of citizens, who had seen him enter the house and had gathered round to hear what he said, "you will see and know for yourselves how great and universal is the sovereignty of your King and Prince. This province is but one of the many dominions, principalities and thrones which obey their sceptre and own their sway. You have seen or heard of the Prince coming here incognito, and not until you go to the metropolis, or until you see him coming here in State, can you know his greatness and glory; your language has no words to describe either the one or the other. His power and strength are illimitable; his wisdom and knowledge are past finding out; his goodness and lovingkindness are beyond measure; his riches and honour are boundless."

The Viceroy often talked in this strain, or sometimes he told the Builders stories about the Prince, and they always went

## THE BUILDERS

away with their devotion and loyalty kindled afresh.

With a wave of his hand the Great Chief dismissed the people, and when they were alone he said to Fidus, "The gems which you want can be found on the uplands beyond the mountains yonder," and he pointed to a blue line on the horizon to the north. "The plateau is bleak and desolate, but across it, from more distant ranges, flow rivers in whose beds precious stones are to be had. The country is wild and dangerous, and the Adversary often lurks there, intent on hindering any Builder, by force or subtilty, who goes to seek for treasure. Are you willing for hardship and peril?"

"I am willing for anything my Lord commands," was the answer.

"Then go and gather spoil worthy to shine and glitter in the King's City. If the Adversary lurks in that region, the Prince also passes through it in his journeyings, and if you are in danger you

## GEMS FROM THE PLATEAU

may find him by your side. Go forth with courage and hope, and fear no evil. Farewell."

The next morning saw Fidus setting forth accoutred and ready for a long journey. When he reached the mountains which made the base of the plateau where lay his search, he had a severe climb before he reached their summit or what appeared to be their summit—it was really the edge of the great plateau. When he gained it, a cold blast met him and made him shiver, as did also the desolate scene before him.

The plateau was volcanic in origin, and it was broken up into numberless ridges, divided by rough ground or steep ravines. Not a tree, not a blade of grass met his gaze. Here and there a slight cloud of steam indicated a hot sulphur spring, the presence of which, and of minerals in the soil, prevented the growth of vegetation. He went to the highest spot near, and looked round to see if any path was in

## THE BUILDERS

sight. The only landmark, which he could make out, was the dim outline of a tower, which he knew must be one of the Rest Houses, erected by the King's orders for the use of the Builders who came that way. It was too far off to reach that night, so when the sun had set he lay down and slept in the open.

It was very hard walking next day. He had to climb up and down rocks, or zigzag round them, and sometimes to cross a steep ravine with cliff-like sides. But as the hours passed, the outlines of the friendly tower grew clearer, and he hoped to reach it that night. As he rounded the corner of a great rock he saw a stranger sitting near, in a dark rough cloak, the hood thrown over his head, and a long staff in his hand.

Fidus was glad enough to see a fellow-being and he went and accosted him.

"Why have you come to this wild country?" asked the stranger.

## GEMS FROM THE PLATEAU

Fidus told him.

"You are a brave man, but you would have been a wiser one to stay at home. There is no food here as you see," replied the stranger, flourishing his staff towards the dreary expanse; "the water is undrinkable; serpents, scorpions, poisonous insects abound; robbers lurk in the caverns, and you may be sure they will rob you of your gems if you ever find any. The sooner you turn back the better for you."

"Supplies of food will be sent to me," answered Fidus, "and there is drinkable water to be found. As for serpents and scorpions I shall tread them under foot—see, my feet are shod for the purpose. For the robbers I have a sword that has never failed yet."

"But if you are wounded in these brave deeds," said the stranger scornfully, "who will come to your help? You will die like carrion, and vultures will feed on you."



## THE BUILDERS

"If misfortune befalls me, the watchmen will send out to search for me, I doubt not," answered Fidus, and he turned from the stranger and hastened on his way.

When the sun began to set, Fidus found to his great disappointment that his goal was still distant. He was confronted with another steep ravine with sides too precipitous to climb. He had to follow its course—there was nothing else to do—while he searched for an outlet in the direction of the Tower. Light was falling, and deep shadows creeping up, and he began to sing aloud to keep up his courage.

He suddenly stopped. Was there not a voice in the distance? He stood listening. Yes, there was a voice—or were there several voices?—repeating the same words again and again, till they sounded from every side: "Your search will be useless. Your toil will be in vain—in vain—in vain. Hunger and thirst await

## GEMS FROM THE PLATEAU

you. Dangers lurk round you. Enemies seek your destruction. No help will reach you. You will be cast away and forsaken—cast away and forsaken—cast away and forsaken.”

The effect of these words in the deepening gloom can hardly be described. Fidus felt as if a weight like lead had fallen upon him, and while he stood motionless a bat flapped in his face, and a serpent hissed in the distance.

The words seemed to circle round him, to enclose him, to envelop him like an impenetrable fog. He was unaware that he was standing where an extraordinary effect of echoes could be produced, of which the owner of the voice, the stranger he had met, was taking adroit advantage. But the spell must be broken at once, Fidus drew his sword, and brandishing it in the air, ready for any oncomer, he hurried forward, shouting as he went an answer to the echoes that mocked him.

## THE BUILDERS

" No Builder's search can be useless ;  
No labour can be in vain,  
When done at the Viceroy's bidding ;  
The echoes shall shout again.

" Food will the Messengers bring me  
And help for each needy hour ;  
If enemies fierce beset me  
I'll flee to the Refuge Tower.

" If pressed by fear or danger  
The Prince will stand by my side ;  
And I'll gather gems from the hills  
For the place where he 'll abide.

" They shall shine and gleam in the light  
In streets that glitter with gold,  
On royal crowns, in marble white,  
In the City of fame untold."

There was still light enough to see his way, and soon the beetling rocks were left behind, the edges of the ravine sloped down, and he was able to climb on to smoother ground. He breathed more freely then, and had just time to seek a spot for the night when darkness fell. The impressions made on him in the ravine had not altogether passed, and

## GEMS FROM THE PLATEAU

he had to repeat the Viceroy's parting words again and again before he could lie down peacefully. "I will fear no evil," he said at last, and fell asleep.

Nor had he any need to fear ! As soon as he was asleep two Messengers glided to his side and there kept guard the whole night through. Not till it was broad daylight and Fidus gave signs of awakening did they move away, leaving by his side a cruse of water and a cake of bread. Fidus was thankful enough to see them, for the food in his wallet was nearly exhausted, but he was still more thankful for this indication that the Royal care and protection were following him.

A short day's march brought him to the Rest House or Tower of Refuge, as it was called indifferently. He was glad indeed when he heard the cheery voice of the watchman who came out to meet him. The house was surrounded by a garden, the soil of which had been made with great labour, and fruit and vegetables

## THE BUILDERS

were grown there on purpose to supply the Builders who came that way. The green spot was a refreshing sight in the wilderness.

Fidus heard a great deal about the neighbourhood from the watchman, and learnt in which direction was the river where he intended to begin his search for the diamonds, which it swept down in its rapid course from the mountains above. He started off in good spirits, reached the next Tower without misadventure, and having arranged with the watchman to send him supplies, found himself next day by the brink of the river.

He built himself a hut of stones, around which every night Messengers kept their tireless watch. He worked early and late, scorched in the sun by day, and chilled by the winds at night, but nothing disheartened him. Every diamond that he found brought him keen delight, and each one was given to the care of the Messenger who brought him food daily, to be for-

## GEMS FROM THE PLATEAU

warded to the Treasure House, and there kept against his return.

One day, after arduous toil, his search was rewarded with a large and beautiful stone of unusual shape. As he was crossing the river, up to his shoulders in water, holding the gem against the light, his hand was struck and cut by a large stone, hurled by an unseen hand. The suddenness of the blow made him relax his hold, and his treasure fell into the river.

He needed no mocking "Aha! aha!" to tell him the author of the mischief. But he could spare no attention for the enemy, his only thought was to re-find his gem. He dived for it; he brought up quantities of gravel and shingle, but it was gone, and when darkness fell he had to give up his search in bitter disappointment. Nor was he more successful afterwards, and at last gave up the stone as lost.

After many days, having well worked that section of the river, Fidus determined

## THE BUILDERS

to move on to another place. Before he started for the Rest House he made one last search in the early morning, where the river was broad and shallow and the clear pools had yielded treasure to him more than once. As he looked in one of them a gleam caught his eye, and to his extreme delight he soon had in his hand the same diamond that he had dropped ; he knew it by the shape. This time he hardly dared to look at it, and thrust it at once into his inner vest. In high spirits he set forth, swinging over the ground at a great pace. It was easier walking than usual, except in one place, of which Fidus said to himself, "This is just the spot for an ambuscade." The words were hardly out of his mouth, when a tremendous blow hit him on the head, and before he could draw his sword another and another followed.

"Take that, and that," said a malignant voice, "for daring to rob my rivers of their treasures." Stunned though he was,

## GEMS FROM THE PLATEAU

Fidus did not lose his presence of mind ; he drew his sword and ran at his assailant, parrying his blows and seeking to break his guard.

The Builders were supplied with matchless weapons from the Royal Armoury, so keen of edge, so finely tempered, that nothing could snap them, and Fidus knew his sword was a match for his assailant's huge staff. After some fencing and desperate lunges from the enemy, Fidus broke his fence and wounded him in the arm. The aggressor instantly turned tail and fled. It was just in time, for Fidus felt his head reeling, and he sank on a boulder, nearly fainting. It was as much as he could do to walk on slowly to the Rest House.

The watchman saw him in the distance and came out to meet him, hurrying his steps when he was near enough to see his plight. Blood was streaming from his head, and he was glad enough to support himself on the man's arm till the Tower



## THE BUILDERS

was reached. His wounds were dressed with deft hands, ointment and balm poured into them, and then he was bidden to rest in the shade, while the watchman prepared food. A table of choice viands was set before him, and a refreshing cordial, and when he had partaken of all that he needed, bunches of grapes were brought.

After a few days he was ready to set out again, this time to another part of the plateau, which was said to be one of the best places for finding corundum in its red and blue varieties—rubies and sapphires. A river flowed round a mountain spur, whose rocky precipice flanked it on one side, while on the other it spread out at its own sweet will over the stones and gravel. Except in flood-time it only flowed in small channels through the midst of the broad bed, any part of which might yield up treasures to the searcher. Fidus found a cleft, at the foot of the rocky wall, which made a convenient shelter at night. He

## GEMS FROM THE PLATEAU

soon knew that he had come to the right place, and gem after gem was added to his store.

One day, after a wet and stormy night, he went a long distance up the river, to a spot which he had marked for his search. He worked long and hard without remarking that the water was overflowing its usual channels and rapidly spreading over its broad bed. A roaring sound suddenly made him look up, and he saw a sheet of water coming towards him. He had only time to gather up his tools and run for the cliff before a dark mass of water was rushing past him.

He looked with astonishment at the broad stream before him. He had heard that these mountain rivers rose suddenly, but had not realized what it meant; and he hoped the waters would subside as rapidly as they came. But they were still rising, and he looked in vain for any place of escape. Night was coming on, and it was impossible to scale the precipice

## THE BUILDERS

behind him. The water was over his knees, and his only chance was to cross over to the other side before it grew deeper. He reckoned that it would be up to his shoulders in mid-stream now, and there was no time to lose if he was to get through—it would be as much as he could do to ford the channels as it was.

But the rush of the water was more than he had counted on, and it was with great difficulty that he slowly battled on. The waves eddied round him and splashed in his face. The light had failed, and he could hear and see nothing but the swirl of the waters. Every moment he thought he would lose his footing, but some friendly rocks helped him over one place where the water was deepest. When he reached the middle of the stream he found it was up to his neck and threatened to engulf him.

"The next channel will be quite out of my depth," he said to himself; "I shall be carried down the stream directly." A

## GEMS FROM THE PLATEAU

wave went over his head, and he was just giving himself up for lost, when a voice, which thrilled through him, said, "Give me your right hand; I will help you; the river shall not overflow you."

Then he knew the Prince was by his side, and that his Liege Lord had come to his help in the extremity of his need. He stretched out his hand, and as the Prince's strong right hand closed over it, he felt a new power of resistance to the flood. The waves still buffeted him, but his head was upheld by the Prince's left hand, so that he could breast them safely, and the help was not relaxed until they reached shallow water and the danger was past.

When they got to dry land, Fidus saw a lamp standing on a rock. The Prince took it, and bidding him follow, led the way to one of the Towers of Refuge. He talked as they went along and praised Fidus for his persevering search and for his work and his love, and he added, "I

## THE BUILDERS

do not call you a servant, but I call you my friend." He also told him that he looked forward to the completion of the City, and the time when he would dwell there amongst all his citizens and friends.

When they neared the Tower, the Prince told Fidus to rest awhile before resuming his search. And then, with the same parting words as the Viceroy had used, "Fear no evil," he turned away, and Fidus, with a glowing heart, entered the Rest House.

Time passed, and Fidus thought that his work on the plateau was nearly finished. He had a goodly store of precious stones. From cliffs of black limestone he had secured some emeralds—a hard and perilous task it had been. Many a time it was as much as he could do to hold fast to his purpose. The cliffs were in a wild, inhospitable region, and he nearly lost heart when, after a long while, his toil had no reward. But every day, though he did not know it, he was getting nearer

## GEMS FROM THE PLATEAU

the secrets of the rock, and at last he opened up a very nest of treasure, and returned to the Rest House exulting over the magnificent gems which he had discovered. In another of the mountain strata he had obtained some specimens of deep red jacinth and fiery red almandine or carbuncle. Crystals of topaz, beryl and garnet, and green idocrase had also rewarded his search in other localities.

And now he planned one more journey to the bed of a mountain torrent, and then intended to start home to the Royal City. The torrent flowed through a deep ravine between two mountains in a series of cascades. Difficult and dangerous rock climbing was necessary to reach the various places along its course, where, amongst the deposits of gravel brought down by the stream, might be found nodules of iron-stone, in the fissures of which were precious opals. He was very successful in his search, and in good spirits started for the last and highest of the cascades, above which he

## THE BUILDERS

hoped to find treasures, in the rocky pools lapped by the rushing waters.

The ravine narrowed there and its smooth slippery sides at first defied his endeavour to climb. He tried at several points before he found footholds by which he could slowly ascend. He was soaked with spray when at last he grasped the summit of the cliff and drew himself up to it. But his difficulties were by no means past. The water made a double leap and the place he had reached was only a rocky platform, where it paused for a moment in its headlong career.

If the cliffs below were difficult to scale, those above were quite impossible, and after trying in vain to find any practicable spot, Fidus gave it up. The rocky bulwarks towered up as smooth as a wall, and the leaping waters and blinding spray shut out any chance of ascent on that side. So he tried to start back by the way which he had come, but he had only let himself down a short way when he stuck fast. He could

## GEMS FROM THE PLATEAU

not feel the slightest ledge or unevenness on which to step, and after nearly losing his balance in the attempt, he had to mount to the platform again.

Other attempts ended in the same hopeless manner, and at nightfall he was in a sorry plight. There was not one corner beyond the reach of the spray. He was in impenetrable darkness. At mid-day there was no light to spare in this rocky depth, and at night it was black darkness. But the worst part was the outlook for the morrow: what better chance was there of finding escape then than there had been that day?

Fidus fell into a desponding mood, which was deepened by suddenly hearing a voice shouting from the heights above, "Aha, Aha, I have seen you! There is no help for you! We will swallow you up; we will persecute and take you. There is none to deliver you," and at the same moment Fidus heard a flight of arrows fall on the rocks near him. He drew his



## THE BUILDERS

sword in case the enemy should attack him at short range, and stood ready for desperate resistance. At the same moment there flashed into his mind the parting words of the Viceroy, which the Prince had used to him also, and a fresh conviction took hold of him that the Royal care and protection would reach him in this dangerous position, though he could not think how.

But even with this conviction he passed a terrible night. He was soaking wet, shivering with cold, deafened by the roar of the water, disturbed by the cruel voices which broke at intervals on his ears. With the first ray of light, he tried again to climb either up or down, but was frustrated at every point. The footholds were so slight and precarious that he could make no way, and he began to wonder how he had ever mounted by them.

He was in a desperate strait; every possibility of escape seemed to be shut off. He ate his last morsel of food at midday,

## GEMS FROM THE PLATEAU

and as he stooped to drink some water, a ray of sunlight shot down into his prison. It was only when the sun was at its zenith that it could pierce down to this abyss, and its warmth and brightness cheered Fidus. Moreover it caught the water and spray, and lighted them up with rainbows that changed every moment. Fidus was watching one perfect arch which touched the water where it leaped to the ground, when suddenly from beneath it there came a tall figure, whom he recognised instantly as the Prince.

The rainbow illuminated his white robe as he beckoned to him, saying, "I have come to deliver you ; follow me." Fidus made his way across the rocks in haste and, following the Prince, he was astonished to find that there was plenty of space to walk under the arch of the waterfall, and that on the further side, completely hidden by the spray, there was a sort of "chimney," made by the action of the water, which was comparatively easy to climb. But

## THE BUILDERS

before they began to ascend it, the Prince unfastened his long girdle, and bidding Fidus tie one end round his waist, took the other, and held him up by it the whole way. The "chimney" soon merged into a broad rift in the cliff, and before long they were on the mountain-side, far above the ravine.

Fidus poured out his thanks and gratitude to the Prince, who looked at him with such love and favour that his heart was knit to him afresh in homage and devotion.

Then the Prince said, "I know how you have borne the heat of the day, and how you have laboured and have not fainted. Your work here is finished now; go, return to the Royal City." With that he turned away, and Fidus, rooted to the spot, watched him till he had quite passed out of sight. Then he hurried down the steep slope to the nearest Rest House, whence he started homewards.

On his way across the wilderness he

## GEMS FROM THE PLATEAU

met a fellow-Builder who was also returning to the City, and as they journeyed along together they exchanged experiences. His comrade had also stories to tell of the Royal care which had followed him unceasingly, and of more than one critical moment when the Prince himself had come to his rescue.

"And once," he continued, "our Liege Lord came simply to cheer me. I was worn out with hard work in the burning sun, and felt overwhelmed with the isolation and loneliness of the place where my search lay. It seemed nearly unbearable, and as I sat on a rock in the twilight, I believe that I was groaning aloud, when a hand was laid caressingly on my head, and I felt a kiss on my brow. I looked up and saw the Prince standing by my side. 'Be of good cheer,' he said; 'your work is not in vain.' Before I had time to say anything he was gone, but that kiss went through and through my whole being with comfort and healing. It felt like balm

## THE BUILDERS

for days afterwards, and when I am lonely it comes back to me still."

When they reached the City, Fidus reported himself to the Viceroy, and received words of welcome and commendation. At the Treasury he found his store of precious stones awaiting him, and he was filled with joy as he looked them over and saw that they were amply sufficient to fulfil his design.

The gems were cut and polished to the accompaniment of joyous songs, and as each diadem was finished and fitted into the façade of the building, Fidus felt new triumph in the thought that it would shine and sparkle in honour of his Sovereign and his Prince in those glad days, when they came to take up their residence in the glorious City.

## CHAPTER XI.

### FROM THE ALIEN TOWN TO THE ROYAL CITY.

**A**MONGST the inhabitants of the Alien Town was a leading citizen named Honestus. But though one of the best known men in the place, he could never be persuaded to take part in any public work. It was in vain that he was asked to join the town council, and in vain that the Chief Magistrate pleaded for his help in any emergency. He lived somewhat apart from the people, and they thought there was something of scorn in his attitude towards them. Some accused him of disloyalty to their Government and some repeated scathing things, which he was reported to have said about their institutions, their buildings, even their

## THE BUILDERS

famous Town-hall the very centre of their civic life.

There came a time when the Chief Magistrate thought it necessary to interfere, and he sent for Honestus to come and have an interview with him. He came willingly, not in the least disturbed by the summons, and to each remonstrance, he replied that he had only expressed a fraction of the truth. "If you wish to have it in plain language," he continued, "I tell you that this town is a sham and a counterfeit from end to end. Why in the name of good sense cannot we build our houses as we like? Why are we bound to copy the buildings of the Royal City (which we hate!) for which we have none of the right materials? All this rubbish of painted wood, and base metal and glass gems is enough to make anyone scornful. The very wood is often rotten. Our vaunted Town-hall will be falling to pieces soon."

"That I emphatically deny," interrupted

## ALIEN TOWN TO ROYAL CITY

the Chief Magistrate angrily. "It is a magnificent building and will last for ages."

"You will think differently if you inspect the north portico, as I did yesterday," answered Honestus. "It's slight foundation is giving way, and its walls were built, as you know, with untempered mortar. They will soon be bulging out. Some day after a gale you will find it in ruins."

"I don't believe it," said the Governor; "and I warn you that you are bringing yourself within reach of our laws against treason, which, on the next accusation, I shall certainly put into motion against you. If this town is not good enough for you," he added derisively, "go and join the Royal Builders and be a slave like them."

"Perhaps I will," said Honestus to himself, astonished to find that the words voiced a thought which had only dimly suggested itself to him before. And when he returned home he found his family in full sympathy with all that he had said to the Chief Magistrate.



## THE BUILDERS

"I can never make out, father," said his son Verus, "why we are obliged to copy the Royal City. The paint and gilt are always wearing off. Why can't we have plain wooden houses?"

"Most people take the make-belief for reality," answered his father, "but I don't intend to hold my tongue whatever happens. It would be worth copying the Royal City if we had the right materials, but we can't get them without giving in our allegiance to the King. I am sick of counterfeit work."

"We might go and join the Builders if they were free men," said Verus, "but I am told they are treated like slaves."

"That I can't believe," answered his father. "Any of them that I have seen about the country have looked free, and independent and happy too."

"Shall I go and spy out the land, and bring you back a report?" asked Verus. "It is easy to get into the City." And it was settled then and there that he should start

## ALIEN TOWN TO ROYAL CITY

off at once, and get to one of the gates by the first streak of dawn, and find out whatever he could about the City, and about the work and the treatment of the Builders.

He arrived there at break of day, and hoped to escape observation as he passed through one of the open gates in the early light. But he was accosted at once by a Master-Builder who was also abroad early. Verus looked very shamefaced as he answered his salutation, and he was not a little astonished to find that the Builder took him in at a glance, guessed the purpose of his visit, and was quite ready to aid him.

"I will take you about," said he in a friendly tone, "and show you much more than you could discover by yourself."

The bright colouring of a rosy sunrise was catching the golden roofs and the sparkling marbles, and Verus could not suppress exclamations of surprise and admiration as he walked along. And when he was shown the interior of some

## THE BUILDERS

of the houses, and saw the same beauty and completeness inside as outside, his astonishment reached its climax. "This will be a matchless City when it is completed," he said; "but is it not true that the Builders are badly treated and worked too hard?"

"We are the freest, happiest people in the universe," answered the Builder warmly. "The King has given stringent orders that only volunteers may share in the work, and every citizen has come of his own accord to enrol his name as a Builder. Our privileges are innumerable, we have direct communication at all times with the King and Prince, we have the friendship of the Viceroy. We have the right to draw anything we wish from the Crown properties, mines, storehouses, and armouries. We have the services of the King's Messengers. We each have a title-deed to an inheritance at the metropolis. When the City is finished and our Sovereigns take up their residence in it, more

## ALIEN TOWN TO ROYAL CITY

gifts and favours will be heaped upon us, and we are even to rank as members of the Royal House."

Verus was too profoundly surprised to answer at first, and then he said simply, "I wish I had known all this long ago; I would have come and joined the work."

"Come, and enrol yourself at once," answered the Builder.

"I can't do that," said the young man, hanging his head. "You have guessed something about me, but you don't know that I belong to the Alien Town. We are all enemies to the King there."

"I myself once fought against the King's forces, alas!" was the citizen's answer; "but the Prince forgave me and permitted me to join the work, and he will treat you in the same way."

"First I must report at home what I have seen," said Verus. "My father is sick of the Alien Town."

With that he started back, and his lips were eloquent as he described to his

## THE BUILDERS

parents all that he had seen and learned of the glorious City.

Honestus questioned him closely, and then he said, "If all this is true, there is a momentous decision before us. Shall we quit this Town, and crave the Royal pardon and enrol ourselves as Builders?"

"Let us think it over," answered his wife, Honesta. "We must first find out where and how we can approach the Royal Government."

"The Builder told me all about that," replied Verus. "Everyone has to go to the Viceroy's Palace, and names can only be entered on the Royal Muster Roll in his Presence Chamber. The lodge gates are open night and day, and attendants are always waiting there to receive anyone who wishes to take the oath of allegiance."

The next morning Honesta begged her husband not to delay setting out on their important journey. "I could not sleep for a moment last night," she said; "all

## ALIEN TOWN TO ROYAL CITY

the news which Verus brought about the King kept repeating itself in my ears, and I long to take the oath of allegiance to him, and to leave this place. It enrages me to think of all the lies circulated here about him, which I believed. Let us pack up and start at once."

"We can't take any of our possessions with us," said Verus, "but you won't mind that, Mother, when you see the outfit which will be given to us. Everything in our house looks shabby and worthless since I saw yesterday what the Royal looms and workshops produce, and we shall be given possessions of all kinds from the King's Storehouses."

"Shall we start as soon as it is dark to-night?" asked Honesta.

"No, in broad daylight," answered her husband; "and if any of the townsfolk ask where we are going, I shall tell them. If they insult us or stone us, it can't be helped."

How the news of their purpose got

## THE BUILDERS

rumoured abroad they never knew, but they found a crowd awaiting them outside when they left their house. Friends seized them and remonstrated loudly against their desertion of the Town; others threatened them with arrest before they got beyond the jurisdiction of the Chief Magistrate; others shouted insults, and before they reached the end of the street, missiles followed them from some of the jeering youths. One of their near relations made a determined endeavour to stop them, and parted with them in a passion of rage, when he found he could not turn them from their purpose.

They walked on steadily, and breathed more freely when they had passed the town-gates and were on the high-road beyond. When evening came they were nearing the Viceroy's Palace, and then Honesta's heart began to fail. "What excuse can we give for having lived so long in the Alien Town?" she asked. "I

## ALIEN TOWN TO ROYAL CITY

tremble to think how just the King's anger will be with us !”

“ We can make no excuse,” answered her husband ; “ we shall throw ourselves on his mercy, and humbly crave forgiveness.”

Just before coming in sight of the Palace, the road mounted a grassy slope covered with flowers, and broken here and there with groves of trees. As they were passing one of these woods, there emerged a tall figure, who stood before them with a threatening gesture.

“ Where are you going ?” he asked in a menacing voice. “ No inhabitants from the Alien Town have a right to travel along this road.”

“ We are going to the Palace,” answered Honestus boldly, “ which every subject in this province has a right to do.”

“ Do you know that you are travelling straight into justice and punishment ? I warn you to turn back before it is too late,” replied the stranger.



## THE BUILDERS

"We are going to crave the King's pardon and forgiveness, and have good hope of obtaining it," answered Honestus again.

"You will be made servants and slaves," was the reply. "As you value your freedom, go back."

"We are escaping," said Honestus, "from bondage into liberty. The laws of the Alien Town have become insufferable to us."

"Then I will alter the laws in your favour," answered the stranger, in a voice of authority which revealed to them at once that their interlocutor was the Adversary. "Return with me and I will grant you special privileges and honours, and appoint you to a rich office, young man," he said, turning to Verus.

But on again receiving a refusal, the Adversary resumed the menacing tone in which he had first spoken.

"I command you to return at once, or I will make you suffer for it," he said in a

## ALIEN TOWN TO ROYAL CITY

voice of thunder, almost transfixing them with the fury of his eyes. At the same moment he lifted the long staff in his hand, as if to belabour them. But suddenly his hand fell to his side; he turned and hurried into the woods.

They looked about to see the cause of this unexpected deliverance, and saw in the distance, on the road along which they had come, a solitary figure on a white charger.

"Who can this be?" said Honestus. "Someone belonging to the Royal Court, doubtless, or the Adversary would not have fled before him. If he notices us as he passes, we must make obeisance to him, and beseech his help."

Their eyes were fixed on the rider as he drew near, and their hearts began to burn as they noted his royal mien, and the majesty of his glance and bearing. He was just abreast of them when Honesta said in an awe-stricken voice, "It must be the Prince."

## THE BUILDERS

Before the words had passed her lips, he was by their side, and dismounting from his horse. They threw themselves on their knees before him, crying, "Have pity upon us, Most High Prince. We throw ourselves on your mercy. We beseech your pardon."

"I will surely have mercy upon you," was the immediate answer, "and I will abundantly pardon you."

"We have broken your commandments; we have rebelled against your rule," they said again.

"Your rebellions, which are many, are forgiven," replied the Prince—for it was indeed he. "Have no fear; arise, and follow me."

Trembling, they obeyed, and he led them along the road, whence, a few paces further on, they could see the Viceregal Palace, and the lodge at the entrance to the grounds.

He made them walk by his side and he talked to them as they went. They

## ALIEN TOWN TO ROYAL CITY

listened, amazed, to words of welcome and forgiveness, far transcending their boldest hopes, and were astonished not to hear one word of reproach or censure.

Indeed they could hardly believe that they heard aright when he said, "I will cancel the record of your rebellion, and I will not remember your sins against my Government." He said many other gracious words to them, which were so sweet to their ears that they wished they were further from their goal. But half an hour's walk brought them within hail of the lodge, and the attendants in spotless white uniforms came at once to meet them, making deep obeisance to their Lord.

As they stood before him Honestus and his family looked down at their own clothing, and for the first time realized from what coarse worthless materials it was fashioned, and what a mean appearance they made. The Prince seemed to read their thoughts, for he said to the

## THE BUILDERS

attendants, "Take them, that they may lay aside these garments, and clothe them with change of raiment."

When they returned he called them to him, and gave them each a gold ring, bidding them wear this token of his favour and pardon. For answer they threw themselves on their knees before him, and poured out their sorrow and contrition for having so long sided with his opponents. And then, as he gave them his hand to kiss, they added fervent words of love and devotion. "From this moment, Most High Prince, we belong to you for life or for death, to obey your rule, to keep your laws, and to work early and late, if your favour permits it, in the building of the glorious City."

He smiled upon them, and saying, "Come with me," he took them himself to the Audience Chamber. As he entered he called to the attendants, whose duty it was to keep the Royal Muster Roll, to bring the book to him, and with his own

## ALIEN TOWN TO ROYAL CITY

hand inscribed their three names in it, and the date. Then he brought them to the Viceroy saying, "He will teach you about my will and commandments. He will show you things your eyes have never seen, and tell you that which you have never heard or thought of, and make known to you the things which are freely given to you by the King. At all times seek his guidance and follow his counsel——" and then he left them.

There was no possibility of fear when they looked up to the Great Chief. Love and confidence filled their hearts. He handed each of them the King's Token, bidding them guard it well, as it gave them right of entrance to all the Royal possessions in the province. Then, as the day was far spent, he invited them to stay in the Palace for the night, and bade them come and dine with him in the banqueting hall. While they were regaled with such food as they had never tasted before, the Viceroy told them many things about their

## THE BUILDERS

Sovereigns, about their place of Government, about their purposes for the future of their people, and about their solicitude and care and thought for each of their subjects.

The next day the Viceroy himself brought them to the City, and assigned to them each a building site. They were surprised to find that each house was to be different. "The King does not wish to have sameness or monotony in his City," said the Viceroy, as he handed them the plans they were to follow.

"Shall we have time to finish these houses entrusted to us?" asked Honestus anxiously. "I see that the building of the City is far advanced."

"No one knows the date of the King's Coming," replied the Viceroy. "Work steadily, and I doubt not that your buildings will be completed in time. The size does not matter so much, but the beauty and perfection of the work which you put into them is all important." But before

## ALIEN TOWN TO ROYAL CITY

beginning they were taken about the City by a Builder, in whose charge they were placed, and as they saw the magnificent avenues and streets they were lost in admiration.

"There is just one thing that perplexes me," said Verus. "I have noticed here and there a house in which the Builder has mixed in some of the rubbish of the Alien Town, with blocks of pure marble. I know those materials too well to mistake them. How can anyone do such a foolish thing?"

"That is a question I cannot answer," said the Builder, shaking his head.

They were in too great a hurry to get to work to spend much time in exploring the City, and they begged to be taken to the quarries and workshops.

From that day began the happiest time in their whole lives. Honesta looked quite another person. There was light in her eyes and a calm in her face that had never been there before. They were busy



## THE BUILDERS

from morning till night. Sometimes, just for the joy of hearing it, Verus would take his tools and make the marble ring again. "There is the real thing for you," he would say; "how could we have been content so long with sham and counterfeit stone?"

When the first rows of stones were ready, and the foundations of each house securely laid in the Living Rock, there was great rejoicing. As time passed and the buildings grew rapidly under their eager hands, their hopes increased that the work would be finished before the entry of the King. The coming of their Sovereign and Prince was ever uppermost in their minds. Their hearts burned at the thought of again seeing their Lord, whose mercy and goodness had made them his loyal subjects, his devoted servants, and his ardent Builders.

## CHAPTER XII.

### THE CHILD BUILDERS.

**C**HILDREN were allowed at an early age to enrol themselves as Builders. Sometimes their parents brought them, sometimes they came trotting to the lodge of the Palace all alone, and sometimes a little one not only came of his own initiative, but brought his father or mother with him, as they had not been able to resist the plea that if their child became a Builder, they must also join in the great work.

When the Viceroy heard of the children coming, he never waited for them to be brought to him, but went to meet them, and took them into his arms, and they might be heard laughing with joy as he fondled them and talked to them. Each

## THE BUILDERS

child had a Messenger specially assigned to watch over him. They lived at first in what the Viceroy called his nursery. They played in the gardens around the Palace which was building for the King, where also lay their first little bit of work, which was to tend the flowers.

They had other happy occupations, and soon began to handle miniature tools, and learned, as they played at building, the first rudiments of their craft. They liked to have a little of the real cement with which to make their play-houses, and loved to see its shining lustre on their blocks. And all the time they were learning more than they knew.

But the time came when they were old enough for real work. There was no stated age for this. Some began earlier and some later, just as the Viceroy directed. Supplied with tools suited to their strength, they were initiated by the Royal Workmen into the mysteries of sculpturing flowers, and fruit, and birds,

## THE CHILD BUILDERS

of polishing marble, and of cutting the blocks from the quarries. And it was a joyful day when they were given a site by the Viceroy, and commenced in earnest the house which was entrusted to them to build for their King.

If the children saw the Viceroy anywhere in the distance, there was always a rush and a scramble to be the first to take his hand. Sometimes he let them gather round him under the trees, while he told them stories about their Prince—how, when he was conquering the province, he always had time for the little ones, and how one day when he was on a march, hearing some of his guards dispersing a crowd of children who wanted to come to him, he was very much displeased, and ordered the soldiers to open their ranks and to let all of them come, and when they ran to him, he took them in his arms and embraced them.

Another of their favourite stories told how once, when the Prince was marching

## THE BUILDERS

in the country, surrounded by his officers, he saw a little boy playing near by. He beckoned to him, and walked to camp with the little hand clasped in his. Afterwards, all the time that he was talking over deep matters with his staff, he had the child on his knee with his arms round him. The Viceroy told them also how the children shouted, "Long live the Prince!" especially on one occasion, a few days before the terrible single combat, they had shouted and shouted again till they made the town ring with the words.

"We shall shout, too, when he comes with the King," they said.

"I wish he would come to-day," said one little girl, "I do long to see him."

"Whenever he comes he will like to hear your voices welcoming him," said the Viceroy. And he talked to them about the pleasures and delights they would have when their Sovereigns came to take up residence in the City, and said they

## THE CHILD BUILDERS

had written orders all ready, that whenever they came the boys and girls were to be allowed to play games in all the great avenues.

The children were eager to prepare something at once for that joyous day, though they knew they might have to wait a long time yet. And little hands were busy for many a day making flags, and proudly they were laid by ready for use at any moment.

The King was kept informed about everything connected with the child Builders. Sometimes he sent for one or another to come at once to the metropolis, as his love required them in his immediate presence. A noble little boy, about seven years old, was told, when he was in bed one night, that a Messenger had come to take him to the Palace, and that all sorts of beautiful bright things awaited him there. "I don't want any beautiful things," was his answer; "I only want to see my Prince." And he gave his hand to the

## THE BUILDERS

Messenger and went away with him eagerly.

There was another lovely child who showed promise of great skill; even her play-work, as a little thing, was beautifully done. The Viceroy allowed her to begin earlier than usual in the real workshops, and she showed herself an adept in everything she was taught. But a day came when the tools felt heavy to her hands, and the marble seemed hard and difficult to chisel, and tears were rolling down her cheeks—she was but twelve years old.

The door of the workshop opened, and the Prince walked in and went straight to her.

“I will stay by your side while you finish that task, little beloved,” he said. She seized his hand and kissed it. Her tears were quickly dried, and the difficult bit of work went better, though it was still hard.

When it was finished the Prince asked if she would like to put aside her tools,

## THE CHILD BUILDERS

leave the work, and come with him to the King's Palace? "Yes," was the immediate answer, "if you will take me, for I am so tired," and she put her hand confidently into his. He led her to his chariot which was in waiting, and there the little one nestled against his arm with a look of complete satisfaction, and this was the last that the Builders, who were waving farewell, saw of her as she was driven rapidly away.

Some of the best work in the City was done (when they had grown up) by those who had been child Builders. They had learnt their craft so well from early days, that they had acquired both technical knowledge and delicacy of skill and touch, which only long and careful training could impart.

Any onlookers, who might have watched the progress of the City, would have been struck by the immense diversity in the methods and plans of the Builders. Some had not a thought, apparently, except for



## THE BUILDERS

the work in hand ; it was their one object early and late. Others, who had every intention of completing an artistic and beautiful house, worked so intermittently, that their designs entirely lost that symmetry and harmony of effect, which they would have had if they had gone on steadily and continuously. From time to time they turned to other occupations, and when they recommenced work on their houses they had forgotten their original purpose, and various details in the sculpture or in the structure, which had been begun, were never completed, and these omissions gave a jarring note to their buildings.

Some Builders started most busily at the quarries, and were generally seen bustling about either there, or in the workshops, or at their houses. But somehow or other their houses left much to be desired. The blocks of marble were not accurately measured and would not fit into the places meant for them, so these

## THE CHILD BUILDERS

were filled up with an unsculptured stone, which spoiled the pattern. Or perhaps the door would not shut, because it was hung badly on its hinges. The more minutely the building was examined, the more inequalities and shortcomings were discerned.

Other Builders might be seen continually, chisel in hand, working hard. Their houses made good progress, but they were rarely happy. While they were carving their marble blocks they were always afraid they were not copying the pattern correctly. Their work without their fears would have been admirable, but their fears added to their work marred a great deal. In fact the constant apprehensions that they had not chosen the most suitable marble, that they had not gone to the best quarry, that they would not have strength or skill for the next stage of the building, stole away the joy of the work. While other citizens could be heard singing in the workshops, or might be seen

## THE BUILDERS

rubbing their hands with glee, because one part or another of their houses was accomplished, these were wringing their hands with dread lest their next bit might be less satisfactory than what they had just finished.

Others again seemed almost to forget that they had enrolled themselves for a great enterprise. After their house was well started they were not to be found at work. They had gone back to their former business of one kind or another. And when messages from the Viceroy brought them back to the City, the workshops or quarries saw them but for a brief space, and again they vanished from the busy scene; and the houses entrusted to them, which should have been rising steadily, made little or no progress.

Some Builders, who had begun with a carefully-laid foundation, lost their first ardour, and their one purpose seemed to be to get the stone which was most easily handled, the pattern which could be most

## THE CHILD BUILDERS

quickly copied. They had no thought of seeking gold for a glittering roof, or gems to make the front of their houses sparkle and scintillate. No work in the burning sun for them, no hardships or exposure if they could help it, but the materials nearest at hand, good stone, perhaps, if it was easy to obtain, or rough and ready material from the Alien Town, if a vendor of such came across them. Their houses were far from fulfilling the splendid scheme of the City which their great Chief had planned.

Even some of the Master-Builders were to be found in these ranks. And having lost the keenness for their craft, they ceased to give incentive and inspiration to the citizens who came to them for encouragement and advice.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### A BUILDER IN PERIL.

ONE of the houses, which Verus had marked with surprise, as showing materials from the Alien Town mixed in with those from the Crown quarries, was being built by a citizen named Contrarius. If Verus had seen it at close quarters he would have been much more surprised, for it was not only from the Alien Town that materials had been gathered.

The house was curiously made, on a plan of Contrarius' own invention. It was in sections, each room built separately opening into a common hall, like the petals of a flower meeting in the centre. The room towards the street was solidly built of stone, but it was unfinished and only

## A BUILDER IN PERIL

partially roofed; another was made of wicker-work from the Village of Trumpets, and thatched with fine palm leaves; another was of wood and thatched with straw.

If any of his friends expostulated with Contrarius he would point to the front of the building and say, "You see the King's materials are there; what more can you wish? I want to have variety, and these things have been so carefully selected, that they will endure as long as the heavier stone. I liked the idea of only building with marble when I started on the work, and I think some of the Builders' houses are magnificent, but tastes differ, and I am going to finish my house in my own way."

He was speaking in this strain one morning to a friend who met him. "I am off on another search expedition," said he gaily, "I don't know where or for how long, but I mean to find something new for another section of my house. It will

## THE BUILDERS

be the nicest in the City when I have finished, as you will see some day!" And not waiting for an answer he went whistling down the road.

The only intention he had formed so far was to visit a friend named Mutino, who lived about a day's journey distant. He was one of the people of the country, well-to-do, and always anxious to entertain any Builder who passed his way. He took a malicious pleasure in giving them advice about their work and introducing vendors to them, when he had the chance, who sold false gems and mock jewels, and great was his triumph when they were taken to the Royal City, and used in the decoration of houses there as if they were genuine. Contrarius often came to see and consult him about his house, and Mutino had a larger share in the peculiar shape it was taking than Contrarius was aware of.

He hailed Contrarius effusively. "I have been hoping to see you," he cried,

## A BUILDER IN PERIL

"for a traveller who visited me lately brought news which will interest you." And then he proceeded to pass on the tidings which this man had brought about some people, who lived on a distant mountain, who were very ingenious and dealt in a variety of strange wares. "I believe you might get some new ideas from them," added Mutino.

"I have never been so far afield as those mountains," answered Contrarius, "but so much the better; I like wandering about, and I am bent on finding new wares, for you know my house must be unique."

During Contrarius' visit they talked a great deal about this little-known region. He could not be persuaded to stay long, as he was in a hurry to start for it. "You had better travel as light as you can," said Mutino when he was preparing to go, eyeing his sword while he spoke. "What do you want that thing for?" he asked, pointing to it; "it will only be in



## THE BUILDERS

your way. If you must have a weapon, take one of my new ones. It is much lighter to carry; this one is ancient and heavy."

"All right," said Contrarius, unbuckling it, and throwing it on the ground; "keep this till I return and let me have yours. It is no weight at all," he said, flourishing it about. "This and my strong staff are all that I shall want." And thus caparisoned he started off.

Until he approached the mountains he travelled by the usual roads, then he took to the narrow paths used by the natives of the district. It was wild country and he found it more difficult to make his way than he expected. He lost himself several times. Once he got into such a plight on a steep moraine that he had to retrace his steps, and found himself in the evening at the village from which he had started in the morning.

Another time, in an attempt to make a short cut, he left the track and plunged

## A BUILDER IN PERIL

down through a steep wood. But the short cut proved so long that he did not reach his destination that day. The wood stopped abruptly over a deep precipice, and before he could discover a way around it, darkness overtook him, and he had to sleep where he was without supper or shelter.

When at last he reached a little hamlet in the hollow of the hillside, he heard, to his great surprise, that a King's Messenger had been asking for him, and was waiting for his arrival. He had not the least wish to see this envoy, and was retreating into the woods to avoid him, when the Messenger stood in front of him.

"The Viceroy sent me with an urgent message summoning you to return at once to the City," he said, handing Contrarius a tablet, stamped with the Viceroy's device, on which he read: "I know your plans and purpose. Remember your Sovereign's commands which you have received and heard. You have erred in wandering so

## THE BUILDERS

far away. Return at once when this message is delivered to you."

"I will return, certainly," said Contrarius. "Will you tell the Viceroy that I have only come in search of materials with which to beautify my house, and will return as soon as I have obtained them."

"Have you no other reply to send?" asked the Messenger gravely.

"None," replied Contrarius.

Without a word the Messenger turned and strode rapidly away.

"I wish that man had not come," said Contrarius as he watched his retreating figure. "His message makes me uneasy. However, the whole City will see by-and-by what an excellent purpose I had in making this journey, and they will covet the rare things that I shall secure."

He then set about arranging the next stage of this journey. He found that he had come by a very roundabout route, and that between him and the little township which he was seeking there was a

## A BUILDER IN PERIL

lofty mountain pass, so he secured a guide to take him across it. It was rough wild country and the ascent was very stiff. When they had reached the most difficult part a thick mountain mist suddenly enveloped them. They got off the track and the guide lost his bearings. After vainly trying to discover the way they found themselves stranded on the precipitous slope.

They spent many miserable hours in the scanty shelter which a niche between the rocks gave them, and then they wandered on again. But the mist did not lift until the third day, and forlorn and wretched objects they looked when at last it rolled away, and they could once more see their surroundings. They regained the track, but Contrarius had to go on alone, as the guide refused to accompany him another step. However, he was almost at the summit of the pass, and on the other side he found that the path traversed easier ground.

## THE BUILDERS

Soon he saw a little town below him, and to his great satisfaction reached it before the sun was down. But he was surprised, when he reached it, not to find the welcome he had counted on. The men, whom he first met and saluted, looked at him with suspicion. They told him plainly that they wanted no strangers, and advised him to continue his journey further or return whence he came.

It was with difficulty that he at last persuaded someone to let him have quarters for the night. He was given food, and a hayloft to sleep in. But next day with persuasion and flattery he got permission from the headman to take up his residence with them for a time. By degrees he made friends, and though the jealousy of the people was aroused afresh when they found he wanted to learn their crafts, they agreed, in the end, to teach him what they could. He set to work and learnt most curious methods of staining and ornamenting wood-work, and embellishing it with devices that

## A BUILDER IN PERIL

he had seen nowhere else. The result was more grotesque than beautiful, but it was certainly novel and that was enough for Contrarius.

After a considerable sojourn, he began to make preparations to return to the City. Then he discovered that the townsfolk, though they had agreed to teach him their arts, had no intention of letting him carry away any of their handiwork.

"We have taught you our work, but only for you to use here," the headman said, "you can build your house amongst us if you wish, but carry off our wares, never! They are for our own town, and for our town only."

This took Contrarius aback; however, he determined to carry off his goods in spite of their prohibition, and secretly hid them in the outskirts of the town. He hired some pack animals to come one night, so that he could get off quickly and quietly before the people knew of his purpose. It was very dark, and he had just got

## THE BUILDERS

the things safely laden up, when he heard a horn blown. It was shortly followed by a trampling of feet, and he found himself surrounded by an angry mob.

"This is the way you reward us for our friendship," they cried, "you steal away like a thief or a spy; but we will stop you." They seized the animals, and then turned in fury upon Contrarius. He drew his sword to protect himself, but one blow of a stick snapped it into pieces, and he was helpless in their hands. Blows rained upon him, and then he was dragged to the edge of a precipice down which all the rubbish of the town was cast, and hurled over it.

"There's an end of *him*," shouted one of them. And indeed it would have been an end of him if his fall had not been broken by some bushes on the way—broken, but not stopped, for the branches eluded his grasp as he tried to clutch them, and again he found himself rolling downwards. At last, with a terrible thud, his

## A BUILDER IN PERIL

involuntary journey ended. For a time he lay unconscious, and when he came to his senses he was in acute pain. His head was injured; he could not move his right arm or leg—both fractured, he thought to himself—and his left leg was pinned under a stone, which he must have loosened in his descent and which had rolled upon him.

Every minute that he lay there seemed like an age. He was soon raging with thirst, and he dimly wondered how long his agony would last. Again he became unconscious, and then he thought he was dreaming that someone had come to his aid, that someone had put water to his lips. Opening his eyes he could feel, more than see, that some friend was by his side, for he heard a voice say gently, "Drink this." He did as he was told, but he was too much injured to think, and he imagined vaguely that he was dreaming again.

He little guessed who was kneeling by his side; he little knew that the Prince



## THE BUILDERS

himself held a cordial to his lips, that the Prince was binding his broken limbs, that the Prince's strong hands lifted him gently on to a cloak, on which four attendants carefully carried him out of the zone of danger. They halted from time to time at their Lord's command, while he moistened the lips of Contrarius. When daylight broke he gave them orders to take him to the nearest Rest House, which was still far distant, and bade them see that he was well nursed and tended till he recovered. "I shall come and see him again," he added, as he turned away in another direction.

When, after several days, Contrarius came back to full consciousness, he could not think where he was. "Who rescued me?" he asked feebly of the attendant who was by his side.

"The Prince saved you," was the answer.

"Who found me helpless and lying at the foot of the precipice?" he asked again.

"The Prince found you, and bound up

## A BUILDER IN PERIL

your wounds himself, and succoured you," was the reply, "and he ordered us to bring you here, and walked by your side part of the way, and revived you with a cordial again and again."

"Did he not know that I had disobeyed his commands and set his orders at naught?" asked Contrarius.

"Yes, he knew all about you; he receives constant news of his citizens," answered the attendant, "and his care and protection are nearer to them than they often know, while he journeys to and fro in the province."

"I am unworthy of his goodness," said Contrarius, and he remained still and silent for a long time.

One day a few weeks later, when he was making steady progress towards recovery, he saw through the open door a figure approaching, the sight of whom made his heart beat with mingled emotions. He longed to rise from his bed where he was still held fast by his broken limbs,

## THE BUILDERS

and as the Prince—for it was he—entered the room, he could only salute him with humble obeisance, instead of flinging himself on his knees before him as he longed to do.

“I am not worthy that you should come near me, my Lord,” he said humbly, “for I have disobeyed your orders, and I have broken your commands.”

For answer the Prince stooped down and kissed him, saying, “I forgive your disobedience.”

“My Lord, let me tell you the greatness of my transgression,” said Contrarius. “I had a message from the Viceroy bidding me return at once, and I treated it with contempt, and continued on my way.”

“I know your doings, but I could not give you up, though you had wandered far,” answered the Prince.

“I am not fit to be called a Builder of the glorious City,” replied Contrarius; “I have said that the work was a weariness, and I have journeyed far and wide

## A BUILDER IN PERIL

to gather strange materials to build into the house entrusted to me."

"I know what your work and thoughts have been, yet I love you freely," was the answer.

"Reproach me, and censure me I pray you, my Lord; your forgiveness overwhelms me, your love burns and scorches me," cried Contrarius, bursting into sobs.

The Prince extended his hand to him, and he covered it with kisses while his scalding tears rolled over it—tears which fell the faster as he noticed the scar upon it, which the Prince had borne ever since the terrible Combat, of which Contrarius knew full well the story.

"I am sorry for my sins, and lament that I followed my own way," he said, "henceforth I will obey my Lord's least as well as greatest commands."

"If you love me, keep my laws, follow my orders, and be loyal to my Government, until I come to take up my

## THE BUILDERS

residence in the City," and thus speaking, the Prince left him.

From that time he made rapid progress. He was impatient to return to the City, for he ardently longed to get back to work, and rebuild his house according to the beautiful design originally given to him. As soon as he was well enough to set foot to the ground, he begged to be allowed to start. He was not strong enough to walk far, so a mule litter was got for him, and accompanied by the Prince's faithful attendant he set out on the long journey.

When they had reached familiar landmarks and were within sight of the City, Contrarius became silent. He was filled with emotion too deep for words. When they came to the road leading up to the great gates, he was met by a Messenger from the Viceroy, who handed him a tablet with words of welcome and an invitation to stay the night at the Palace. So they turned towards the lodge.

## A BUILDER IN PERIL

The kindness and friendship extended to him that evening by all the household, as well as by the Great Chief himself, was beyond all that he could have dreamed possible. After a long talk alone with him, in which Contrarius poured out his story and his sorrow for not returning at his command, and in which the Viceroy unfolded to him much that he had not understood before, he went out of his presence with his love and devotion at white heat, and with a new insight into his Sovereign's purposes and thoughts for his citizens.

But there was bitter grief in store for him next day when he went up to his house. He then saw for the first time how bizarre and incongruous the whole structure was, except the one unfinished section in the front. His grief deepened when, after much searching about, he found the discarded design which he had received from the Viceroy, and imagined to himself what the building, covering

## THE BUILDERS

that spot, might have been at that moment, if only he had followed it.

Now, though he longed to pull down this conglomeration and begin to build afresh, he could do nothing but wait with what patience he could muster, till his right hand, which was still in a sling, grew strong enough to wield a tool.

Every day he spent in the house he hated more intensely the work which he used to think was unique, and he panted for strength to begin cutting out blocks of white marble from the King's quarries.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### THE BUILDINGS TESTED.

THE building of the City was far advanced, and the citizens became eager to know if they might soon expect their King and Prince.

Some of them went to the Viceroy to ask if he could tell them, but he said, "No, I can tell you neither the day nor the hour. You know what is written in the Royal Orders, that when the King judges the work to be sufficiently advanced, he will come. And you know that certain indications are described there, which you are bidden to notice. Look for them. In any case, be watchful, and ready to go immediately, at the first sound of the herald's blast, to join your



## THE BUILDERS

acclamations to the mighty welcome which befits the coming of your Sovereign and your Prince.”

The Builders interpreted these words in different ways. Some said that they could not see any of the indications described in the Royal Orders, so there was no hope yet of the King's arrival. Others thought a few of the indications could be seen, but not clearly enough to make them feel that the great event was imminent. Others—and these were the Builders who spent as much time as they could with the Viceroy—said they could clearly see them, both those touching the progress of the work, and those touching the administration of the province. And they had an indefinable conviction, which they could not explain, that the King's coming was not far off, a conviction that was increased with every hour they spent in the Viceroy's presence.

There was a tradition amongst the citizens, though whence it sprang they

## THE BUILDINGS TESTED

could not tell, that the King's Procession, whenever it arrived, would enter by the great gates on the east. The City could be approached from each side of the compass, but they always maintained that it was by the pass crossing the mountains on the east, that the triumphant Procession would wend its way.

And when they talked together of the great event they settled that at the first sound of the warning blast, they would hurry to the great avenue which led from the east gate to the Palace. Every member of the City Orchestra, and everyone who owned a musical instrument, vowed to make such music that day as had never been heard before.

A song, written by one of the Builders, was more popular than ever, of which the first verse ran thus :

“ They come and go the seasons fair,  
And bring their spoil to vales and hills,  
But, oh, there is waiting in the air,  
And a passionate hope the spirit fills :

## THE BUILDERS

Why doth he tarry, the absent Lord?  
When shall the Province be restored  
And Builders all with one accord  
Ring out the cry that the King comes?"

*Chorus*: "What will it be when the King comes?"

It was sung everywhere. Now, it happened at this time, when the hopes of some Builders were low, and the hopes of others were kindled high, that a strange morning broke upon the City. The sun had risen in glory without a cloud on the horizon, but while the day was still young, the weather suddenly changed. The wind rose, dark clouds came scudding up before it, and covered the heavens, and there was a moaning in the air, as if the elements were about to clash in conflict.

The heavens grew darker, and from windward a deep bank of clouds of inky colour, with a serrated green edge and threatening aspect, drove into sight. Lightning played across it and the din of thunder vibrated through the air. There was no doubt that a fearful hurricane was

## THE BUILDINGS TESTED

swiftly closing upon them. They could see it burst on the plain. The trees were bending beneath its fury and the dust whirling before it. It was travelling fast towards the City, and the Builders hastened to the shelter of their houses. All work was suspended, and each citizen called to his neighbours, as he hurried along, to get quickly under cover. Some had barely reached their houses when the wind was shrieking round them, and it was a tussle to get in and close the door.

Darkness covered the heavens, broken only by the lightning, which snapped and cracked, as it flashed across the City, accompanied by terrific peals of thunder. No man living had ever seen such a tempest. Yet the gusts grew still more furious. The wind shrieked round the houses, and beat and lashed them as if it would rend them to pieces.

The people were confused by the roar of sound, blinded with the glare of the lightning, dazed by the crash of the

## THE BUILDERS

thunder-claps, filled with apprehension by the darkness which enshrouded them. A deep awe fell upon every heart, a solemn feeling such as men might have on their way to a judgment seat.

Suddenly there came stealing into every mind the uncalled-for remembrance of the past, from the momentous day of enrolment at the Viceroy's Palace to that instant. The toil, the disappointments, the joyful successes of their work stood out vividly before them, with new meanings attached to each. And as the toil and successes stood out before them so also did refusals to work, and refusals to follow the counsels of the Viceroy. Sweeping into some minds came the undesired remembrance of beautiful designs, which had been commenced and cast aside, of orders which had been received and unheeded, of durable stone once used, and then superseded by slight and destructible materials.

To some Builders, who had these memories thronging back upon them,

## THE BUILDINGS TESTED

there came a terror lest their houses, badly built with mixed materials, should be carried away in the storm that roared around them. To others came crowding the remembrance, not of work in Royal quarry or mine, but of ceaseless exertion to gather materials outside the Crown Lands, and on them fell a dread fear that their flimsy edifices would perish over their heads—fears that were only too well founded.

The storm's wild fury did not slacken ; on the contrary the lightning became more terrific every moment. It ran along the ground like fire.

What was that sound ? Was it a shout of fear ? Whatever it was, no one could render help. Each Builder was motionless, paralyzed by the storm of the elements without, and the storm of emotions within.

What was that noise of crackling, and what were those columns of smoke flying before the wind ?

A house, nay, several houses, in different

## THE BUILDERS

quarters of the City, had been struck by lightning and were blazing like match-wood, and the wind was hurling the fragments into the clouds.

If the City were built with inflammable materials nothing could save it. The sheets of lightning seemed to search the streets for something to devour, and destructible matter, wherever found, disappeared before its fiery breath. Scorched, terrified, the owners of these buildings dashed into the open road, and ran before the storm till they could get under the lee side of one or other of the houses, which stood safe and complete in the midst of the hurricane, and there they crouched shuddering, breathless, and wailing with fear.

Deluges of rain began to fall, and then suddenly the violence of the wind abated, the thunder and lightning decreased, the darkness began to disperse, and the tempest passed away as rapidly as it had come.

## THE BUILDINGS TESTED

By noonday the glory of the early morning had returned, and a cloudless sky looked down upon the City.

But what a change had been wrought in that brief time ! There were gaps here and there in the streets ; the houses which had filled them had vanished away and only their foundation-stones marked the places where they had stood. On some sites there were gaunt and melancholy ruins—a bare wall, one angle with a few stones projecting from it on either side, a single column, a doorway of white marble wrought with rich and artistic design—pathetic evidence of what its owner had once intended to build. A window with delicate tracery work was the solitary witness that a house had stood on another spot. A marble flooring sparkled on another site, surrounded by a low wall, every stone of which had been chiselled with skill and care.

Not only were there such ruined fragments, but some houses, still standing,



## THE BUILDERS

had serious injuries. Wherever they had been roofed with timber or thatch, the roof had gone bodily. In some a breach, smaller or larger, had been made; a door had gone in some instances, or the fittings of a window. Wherever a destructible material had been used, the lightning had licked it out and devoured it.

Alas, for the glory of the Great City! Some streets were complete and magnificent as the original design intended, but many were marred. The perfection of beauty thought out and planned by the Royal Architect was sorely defaced.

On the other hand, the buildings which had passed unscathed through the storm shone out as never before. Every particle of dust or tarnish had been swept away by the wind and rain, and the gold glittered, and the marbles shone, and the gems sparkled so that the eye was dazzled which looked at them.

But the extent of the damage was not known yet. The citizens had been so

## THE BUILDINGS TESTED

much alarmed, that they did not move until they were assured that the sky was clear and the air still. Then they began to venture out and the streets were just filling, when suddenly a sound broke on their ears, which made them stand transfixed.

A trumpet-call rolled through the air, a glorious blast, commanding, imperative. Again it sounded, and yet again, and then every voice shouted with one accord, "The King is coming!"

## CHAPTER XV.

### THE COMING OF THE KING.

THERE was not a moment now to look at the havoc wrought by the storm. To meet the King was the only thought.

The Builders hurried to the great avenue and ranged themselves on either side, the great crowd overflowing through the gates and down the broad causeway. Some pressed to the front places, some to the back ones. Exultant joy was the only thought with many, but tears were in the eyes of some, tears of bitter grief and shame, for they had no buildings to hand over to the King.

Some were still blackened from the smoke of their burnt houses. Their hair was singed, their clothes were scorched ;

## THE COMING OF THE KING

they had only just escaped with their lives. Egoista was one of these. She passed close by Fidus, as she tried to get out of sight behind the crowd. "What do you think the Prince will say to me?" she asked, weeping; "see, even my garments are scorched." "He will be grieved and disappointed for his loss and for yours," he answered, "and perhaps tears will glisten in his eyes, as they did once long ago, but this I know, that he will wipe all tears from your eyes." This thought made Egoista weep still more bitterly. There was nothing she could do now, except wash her face and hands in the stream at her feet, and then she slipped behind the crowd, hiding herself as much as she could.

Contrarius had also felt the breath of the lightning, as it struck and demolished the whole of his building, except the one partly-finished section of marble, in which he had taken refuge through the raging tempest.

## THE BUILDERS

"It has done what my injured right arm has been longing to do," he said to a neighbour. "I wanted to destroy the whole of it, and I am glad that unworthy stuff has vanished. My grief is that there is no time to rebuild, but the Prince knows. I can't think of anything now, except the rapture of looking once more into the face of my Lord, who rescued me from a miserable death."

With other Builders, too, there was mingled feeling. Joy predominated—how could it be otherwise?—but there was deep disappointment and pain in the thought that when the Royal Progress was made through the streets, their houses, which ought to have added some note of harmony, some touch of beauty, to the general splendour of the City, would jar on the magnificence of the whole, by more or less serious defects.

Some defects were minor, and had been quite forgotten by their owners.

Fortis was one of these. He had long

## THE COMING OF THE KING

since forgotten that in an angry fit he had secured some stones from unknown workmen; and his sorrow was intense when he saw the breach made by the lightning in his otherwise beautiful building. But even so, he and Fidelitas had no thought but joy.

Honestus and his family were almost too deeply moved for words at the thought of again seeing the Prince, whose loving-kindness had knit them to him with heartfelt devotion. Their houses were just finished; they had meant to add many beauties to them, but the actual structures were done, and stood as complete and beautiful as their eager hands had been able to make them.

"Father," said Verus, "what of the Alien Town? It lay in the path of the tempest." But Honestus made no answer, as they hurried to take their places in the avenue. The rapturous thought of their great Lord's advent left room for no other feeling at present.

## THE BUILDERS

None of the young children had had a tremor of fear during the storm. They had liked to watch the lightning, and listen to the thunder pealing. They were wild with delight when they heard the trumpet blast, and knew that the King was coming. They rushed to get the flags which had been made for the great day, and took up their places in front of the waiting throng, joining with all their might in the shouts and songs of welcome, which burst again and again from every lip, waving their flags and palm-branches, and dancing and jumping in an ecstasy of joy.

The head of the Procession was close at hand, while its long line spread, like a flood of light, across the plain. Everyone in it, servants, attendants, Messengers, every member of the Households, friends, officers, nobles, were clothed in glistening white. Gold was the only colour that flashed from their apparel, or from the harness of the milk-white steeds.

## THE COMING OF THE KING

The Viceroy had met and joined the Procession with all his attendants, and could be seen leading the way in front of the Prince and King. The far-famed standard, glittering as of old, was carried to the King, and borne aloft above him.

The heralds led the way, the singers followed after, and then the players on instruments. Sounds of rapturous melody already broke on the ears of the waiting citizens, and soon they could distinguish the words: "Praise the King, all ye his citizens, both small and great, and be glad and give honour to him."

And spontaneously the people answered: "We will sing forth the honour of his name, and make his praise glorious."

"This is the City which the King desireth to dwell in, and the Prince will dwell in it for ever," sang the Royal choir.

And the Builders answered again, with a crash of their orchestra: "He cometh, he cometh to reign over the province; he



## THE BUILDERS

will rule his people with righteousness, and over his citizens with equity."

The heralds halted a moment before they crossed the threshold of the City. The four-fold gates of cunning workmanship were wide open; they had been flung back at the first news of the Sovereigns' approach.

During this pause the voices died away, and then broke forth into new and glorious harmonies, as they sang in answer one to another:

"Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in."

"Who is the King of glory?"

"The King strong and mighty, the Prince mighty in battle."

In the dazzling ranks of the Procession, as it moved up the avenue, the Builders saw old friends and comrades waving to them. Constanzia and Philautus were there, and many another citizen who had been summoned to the joys of the King's

## THE COMING OF THE KING

Presence. Then the Viceroy was seen passing through the gates, and the Builders greeted him with mighty acclamations. They thought he had never looked so grand and magnificent before; his face shone with light, and his robe shot rays around him.

When the King and Prince came into sight, a storm of homage, love, and devotion swept over the people, unbroken by one contrary emotion or thought; one mighty impulse moved every mind and heart. Children waved their flags and palm-branches, musicians played, the citizens shouted. Every tear was dried, every thought of sorrow and shame was forgotten and swallowed up in the rapturous joy of beholding their Sovereign Lords.

The citizens were so overwhelmed by the glorious honour of their Majesty, so overpowered by the love and favour which they felt shining upon them, that they fell on their faces in homage and worship.

Then acclamations again rent the air,

## THE BUILDERS

and rapturous music burst forth from trumpets, harps, timbrels, stringed instruments, organs and loud cymbals, such as no mortal ear had heard before. And it seemed as if the flowers rustled their leaves, and the trees clapped their hands, and the streams lifted up their voices, and the birds chanted their songs in joyful unison, as the words thundered out :

“Strength and honour and glory and power belong to our Sovereigns. Make a loud noise, rejoice and sing, for they come to dwell with their people for ever.”

\* \* \* \* \*

The next day all the Builders took up their places, each man in front of his house, or what ought to have been his house. Constanzia stood by her beautiful building, Philautus by the one fragment which remained of his. Fidus stood by his house with its gems flashing in the light, Egoista stood in front of her blackened ruin.

Language cannot describe the glory and

## THE COMING OF THE KING

splendour of the Royal Progress through every street of the City ; nor the generous forgiveness of the Sovereigns to those citizens who had only badly built or unfinished houses, or defaced ruins, or empty sites, to hand over to them ; nor the gifts, privileges, and favours poured upon every one of the citizens whose names were found on the Royal Muster Roll ; nor the high posts and honours given to those Builders, whose beautiful houses were a witness that they had faithfully followed the designs given to them.

Neither can be described the peace, prosperity, and plenty which flooded every corner of the province—for the Adversary and his officers had been captured by the King's forces on the day of the entry—nor the joy and gladness which crowned every living being in that favoured land, where he had taken up his residence, who is KING OF KINGS and LORD OF LORDS.



## APPENDIX

THE following references indicate some of the many passages of Scripture, which are either quoted or referred to in the Allegory :

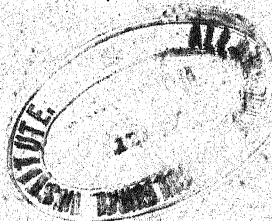
PAGE	REFERENCE	PAGE	REFERENCE
1-227	1 Cor. iii. 10-15	21	... Isa. xxviii. 16
5	... St. John xvi. 7	21	... 1 Cor. iii. 11
7	... Rom. v. 10	21	... Ezra iii. 13
7	... Jas. iv. 7	21	... Zech. viii. 9
11	... Ps. cxlvii. 13	21	... Hag. ii. 4
12	... 1 Cor. xii. 11	21	... 1 Chron. xxii. 5
16	... Ps. xxxii. 5	22	... 1 Chron.
16	... Lam. iii. 42		... xxix. 11-13
16	... Exod. xxiv. 7	22	... 2 Chron. vi. 18
16	... Rev. ii. 17	46	... 2 Cor. ii. 11
17	... Rev. iii. 11	46	... 2 Cor. xi. 13, 14
19	... Rev. xix. 16	51	... Rev. ii. 19
19	... Dan. ii. 28	52	... 1 Pet. i. 7
19	... St. Luke ii. 32	56	... Job
19	... St. Luke i. 76	65	... Ps. lxix. 1, 2
19	... Heb. i. 3	65	... Ps. lxix. 15
19	... Isa. xxv. 4	65	... Ps. lxxxviii. 6
19	... Rom. xi. 26	67	... St. Matt. xiv. 27
19	... Ps. xxiv. 8	67	... Ps. cxlvii. 3
19	... Cant. ii. 4	68	... Isa. liii. 10

# THE BUILDERS

PAGE	REFERENCE	PAGE	REFERENCE
68 ...	Ps. xxxi. 7	119 ...	2 Tim. ii. 2
68 ...	Isa. lxiii. 7	123 ...	Rev. ii. 23
68 ...	Rev. iii. 20	123 ...	Prov. xx. 27
68 ...	Ps. iii. 5	125 ...	St. Matt.
69 ...	Ps. xxxii. 8		xiii. 19
69 ...	Ps. xxiii. 4	131 ...	Job xi. 7-9
69 ...	Ps. cxlv. 19	131 ...	Eph. i. 19-21
70 ...	Ps. lxxxi. 16	131 ...	Rom. xi. 33
70 ...	St. John iv. 14	135 ...	St. John vi. 35
71 ...	Ps. xxiii. 2	135 ...	St. Luke x. 19
74 ...	St. Matt. xxv. 21	135 ...	Eph. vi. 17
74 ...	Ps. xlv. 14, 15	139 ...	Ps. xc. 11
80 ...	Eph. ii. 12	143 ...	Rom. xvi. 20
82 ...	Isa. lxiv. 6	144 ...	Ps. xxiii. 5
83 ...	Eph. ii. 2, 3	147 ...	Isa. xli. 13
83 ...	Isa. i. 18	147 ...	Isa. xliii. 2
83 ...	1 John ii. 1	147 ...	Rev. ii. 19
84 ...	Acts xvi. 30	148 ...	St. John xv. 15
85 ...	St. John vi. 37	151 ...	Ps. xxxv. 21-25
85 ...	Isa. xlv. 8	151 ...	Ps. lxxi. 11
85 ...	Jas. v. 11	153 ...	Ps. xviii. 16-19
86 ...	Isa. lxi. 10	154 ...	Rev. ii. 3
87 ...	Isa. lix. 12, 13	155 ...	St. John xvi. 33
87 ...	Ps. cxix. 47	155 ...	1 Cor. xv. 58
88 ...	Rev. xvii. 14	159 ...	Ezek.
88 ...	St. Luke xvi. 10		xiii. 10-14
88 ...	Rev. ii. 10	162 ...	St. John
88 ...	Col. ii. 2		xiv. 21-26
89 ...	St. Luke xv. 6	162 ...	1 Cor. iii. 21
95 ...	Amos vii. 7	162 ...	1 Pet. i. 4
96 ...	Jer. viii. 8	163 ...	Rom. viii. 17
98 ...	2 Tim. iii. 5	168 ...	Zech. iii. 1-4
107 ...	St. Luke	170 ...	Jer. xxxi. 20
	xii. 36-38	170 ...	Isa. lv. 7
110 ...	2 Cor. vii. 11	170 ...	St. Luke vii. 47
116 ...	Jer. ii. 13	171 ...	Jer. l. 20

# APPENDIX

PAGE	REFERENCE	PAGE	REFERENCE
171 ...	Isa. xliii. 25	207 ...	St. Luke
172 ...	Zech. iii. 4, 5		xxi. 28-31
172 ...	St. Luke xv. 22	219 ...	St. Luke
172 ...	Rom. xiv. 8		xix. 41
173 ...	St. John xvi. 14	219 ...	Rev. vii. 17
173 ...	1 Cor. ii. 9-12	221 ...	St. Luke vii. 47
179 ...	St. Mark	223 ...	Rev. xix. 5-7
	x. 13, 14	223 ...	Ps. lxvi. 2
180 ...	St. Mark ix. 36	223 ...	Ps. lxviii. 16
180 ...	St. Matt.	223 ...	Ps. xcvi. 13
	xxi. 15	224 ...	Ps. xcvi. 9
193 ...	Rev. iii. 1, 2	224 ...	Ps. xxiv. 7, 8
201 ...	2 Chron. xvi. 9	224 ...	Jude 14
202 ...	St. Luke xv. 20	225 ...	Ps. xlv. 3, 4
202 ...	Hos. xi. 8	226 ...	Ps. cl. 3-5
202 ...	Mal. i. 13	226 ...	Ps. xcvi. 12
203 ...	Isa. lxvi. 18	226 ...	Rev. v. 12
203 ...	Hos. xiv. 4	227 ...	Dan. xii. 3
203 ...	Ps. xxxviii. 18	227 ...	Isa. xl. 6-9
203 ...	St. John xiv. 15	227 ...	Joel iii. 18
207 ...	St. Matt.	227 ...	Rev. xx. 1, 2
	xxiv. 36, 42	227 ...	Isa. xxxv. 10
207 ...	St. Luke xii. 36	227 ...	Rev. xxi. 3, 4



*Elliot Stock, 62, Paternoster Row, London, E.C.*